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No. 310

MISS SOMEBODY ELSE

A COMEDY IN FOUR ACTS

BY

MARION SHORT

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MISS SOMEBODY ELSE

CAST OF CHARACTERS

CONSTANCE DARCY, *the brilliant young daughter of Harvey Darcy, a multi-millionaire mine owner and proprietor of the Darcyville Copper Mills.*

CELESTE, *a vivacious French maid in the employ of Constance.*

ANN DELAVAN, *a reduced gentlewoman, manager of the Tuxedobrook Club House.*

MILDRED DELAVAN, *eighteen-year-old daughter of Ann and Jasper Delavan. She is light-headed, fond of display, sentimental, vain.*

MRS. BLAINWOOD, *a society leader of Tuxedobrook.*

FAY BLAINWOOD, *Mrs. Blainwood's debutante daughter.*

ALICE STANLEY, *a graceful society girl.*

FREDA MASON, *a typical society girl in appearance.*

MRS. HERRICK, *a beautiful young society matron.*

SUSAN RUGGS, *Mrs. Delavan's maid-servant. She is of a melancholy disposition and uncertain age. Her hair is arranged with rigid primness and she carries herself stiffly.*

CRUGER BLAINWOOD, *Mrs. Blainwood's only son, a fine type of young American manhood.*

RALPH HASTINGS, *a young crook. He is exceedingly well groomed, and has easy, attractive manners.*

JOHN, *chauffeur to Constance. He is heavy-set, and good-natured, but dignified.*

JASPER DELAVAN, *an elderly scientist. He has a benevolent lovable countenance. He dresses unconventionally, and there is generally a lock of iron gray hair hanging over his forehead.*

SYLVESTER CRANE, *a diffident chap of good family. He is about twenty-three years of age.*

BERT SHAFFER, *an enthusiastic, but awkward member of the younger society set of Tuxedobrook.*

SUGGESTION: *Extra young men and women may be used in ensemble scenes in* ACTS III *and* IV *to good effect.*

LIST OF PROPERTIES

WORN SILK GOWN.
CHEMICAL TEST-TUBES.
GAS-HOOD WITH CAPE.
LEDGERS.
WRITING MATERIALS.
TRAYS.
TEA SERVICE SETS.
COVERED DISH OF TOAST.
BILL.
LETTER.
NOTE.
CATALOGUE.
NEWSPAPER.
TRAVELING BAGS.
AUTOMOBILE ROBE.
WRAPS.
FANCY BASKET.
ASSORTED FANS.
MENU CARDS.
PINS.
VASE.
ROSE.
DAMAGED LEATHER SATCHEL.
PISTOL.
GARDEN SHEARS.
TISSUE PAPER.
BUSINESS CARDS.

MISS SOMEBODY ELSE

ACT I.

TIME: *The present. II A. M. of a day in June.*

SCENE. *A small tea-room in the Tuxedobrook Club House. A tea-table with chairs stands at* R. *and a duplicate one bare of ornament at* L. *Wicker chairs and settee give the room a semi-informal effect, but there is no attempt at ornamentation. Hall backing to archway entrance at* C. *Doors* R. *and* L. *Door at* L. *leads into laboratory. Door* R. *to larger tea-room and other parts of the house.*

DISCOVERED: MRS. DELAVAN *in immaculate white linen dress.* MILDRED, *in girlish sport outfit of a bright color, stands near her. A handsome but somewhat worn silk gown is spread out for inspection across the back of a chair.* MRS. DELAVAN *lifts a fold of it to exhibit as she speaks.*

MRS. DELAVAN. Couldn't this old one of mine be made over into an evening gown that would do, Mildred? It isn't badly worn.

MILDRED. No, dear Mama, it's too grandmotherly for dancing.

MRS. DELAVAN. (*Spreads the skirt out to its full*

width) Trimming would relieve it, and it has such a nice width of skirt.

MILDRED. But what's the use of bothering with it when I've set my heart on that cute dancing frock in Slattery's window? It's been marked down from thirty-five to—guess what?

MRS. DELAVAN. Such a splendid, solid weave—feel of it, dear.

MILDRED. Thirty-three seventy-five, and has rose-bud trimming and a gold embroidered girdle.

MRS. DELAVAN. (*With a sigh*) If you knew how it hurt your mother's heart to deny you anything——

MILDRED. Then why deny me? I've noticed lots of times that the more we Delavans give in to being poor the poorer we grow. I can't see that we're better off when I do without things than when I don't. And all the girls dress so beautifully at Freda's week-end parties.

MRS. DELAVAN. (*Begins to fold up the rejected gown*) Very well, then, dear, you can get the money out of the bead-bag on the dresser in my room.

MILDRED. I thought you'd be sensible about it, Mama. (*Kisses her mother*)

MRS. DELAVAN. I'm afraid I'd be more sensible if I paid the grocer something on account this morning.

MILDRED. Oh, he knows you're good for it some day, and a girl can't stop living just on account of sugar and flour, now can she? Just wait until I marry a millionaire and I'll have party-gowns for every evening in the year.

MRS. DELAVAN. What a little rattle-pate you are!

MILDRED. Maybe I'm not so rattly as you think, Mama. Mr. Hastings has just begged me for the

first and last dances at Freda's hop on Saturday night, and a few in between.

MRS. DELAVAN. Which Mr. Hastings? I hope you don't mean the man who is engaged to Fay Blainwood?

MILDRED. (*With an unbelieving shrug of the shoulders*) It's common gossip they're engaged, of course, but I haven't heard him admit it yet, and he admires me enormously. At least all the girls say he acts as if he did. And he owns timber lands and oil-wells out West, and has so much money he just doesn't know what to do with it! And to think I was on the point of accepting Bennie Spencer, who may never rise above working for a salary!

MRS. DELAVAN. My little girl must not fall in love with a man who belongs to some one else. That means only heart-ache.

MILDRED. But if he's so devoted to Fay Blainwood, why does he spend most of his time in Bridgeton instead of here in Tuxedobrook?

MRS. DELAVAN. Isn't it because he has business interests there?

MILDRED. Oh, he is building a dancing pavilion on the lake front, I believe, just for pastime, but he could motor back to Tuxedobrook every evening just the same if he cared to, couldn't he? You wait until he sees me in that gown made of sunbeams and sky-blue chiffon! But I mustn't stand here any longer. I'll miss that last train for Bridgeton, and besides I want to say good-bye to Daddy. Where is he?

MRS. DELAVAN. Busy in his laboratory, I suppose. (*Enter* JASPER C.) No, there he is now.

MILDRED. Well, Daddy, you're just in time to receive a parting kiss! Bend down that dreamy old forehead of yours.

(JASPER *permits a caress.*)

JASPER. Off again somewhere?

MILDRED. Freda's for a week-end. (*Turns to* MRS. DELAVAN) Did you say the bead bag on the dresser, Mama?

MRS. DELAVAN. Yes, dear.

MILDRED. Well, good-bye, then. And I think I'll 'phone over to Slatterly's to save that blue gown for me in case some other girl tries to run off with it before I get there. (*Exits skippingly* C.)

JASPER. Bless her little butterfly heart! I love to see her happy.

MRS. DELAVAN. And so do I. (*Sighs*) Where have you been, Jasper? You look all tired out.

JASPER. I've been pretty much all over the house. I thought I'd left these test-tubes in the store-room or library, (*Displays test-tubes*) and I upset everything only to find them at last in one of my rubbers in the hall closet. I remember now I placed them purposely in one of my rubbers in the hall closet so as not to forget just where they were. (*Starts for door* L.)

MRS. DELAVAN. Wait a minute, Daddy.

JASPER. (*Hesitates*) What for, mother?

MRS. DELAVAN. I want you to drop your laboratory work long enough to take a look at these books. (*Indicates books, which, with writing materials, are on table at* R.) Things seemed so bright when I first took charge of the Tuxedobrook Club house, but here we are with our faces to the wall just the same as ever. I've just given my last penny to Mildred for a new party gown. I couldn't afford to do it, of course, but I thought it wouldn't make much difference in the general wreck of things and that it might be the last one I should ever have the pleasure of giving her.

JASPER. Cheer up, mother! We always get along

somehow. It's a wonder that in cleaning out that closet some one did not step on these test-tubes and break them.

MRS. DELAVAN. Our output on pastries alone last month was a'most a complete loss, and other items to correspond, and the townspeople criticising me because the weeds are knee high on the Club House lawn. I've heard they think I should emp'oy a landscape gardener. How do they expect me to keep things from going to pieces with the miserable patronage they give me? It's a wonder the ground-squirrels don't run off with the place. For my part I wish they would. We can't hold out much longer.

JASPER. Perhaps we can't, my dear. I dare say you're right. But my gas-generating experiment won't wait. And since you made me this harness to protect the delicate membrane of my nose and throat—(*Displays a cloth helmet which is constructed to cover the head completely and has glass-covered apertures for eyes*) I can keep at my work as long as I like.

MRS. DELAVAN. I wish you'd go over these books. Facts are facts, Jasper.

JASPER. But you know, mother, that scientific facts are the only kind I take an interest in.

MRS. DELAVAN. Jasper, there are some things you've got to know about sooner or later.

JASPER. I dislike the things one has to know about sooner or later—they're invariably unpleasant.

MRS. DELAVAN. Neither you nor Mildred seems to realize the seriousness of my problems at all.

JASPER. Smile, smile, my dear! There's always a bright side if you only look for it. I'm glad I found those test-tubes. Imagine Ozonia, perfected, suffusing the sleeping apartments of little children—Ozonia, as fresh and sweet as pine woods!

Imagine the future man saved from the microbes that attack nose, lungs and throat, because in the tender years of his childhood he has been fortified against them! Health should be the child's normal condition just as the unmarried bud should precede the full-blown rose. I'm willing to give my years to working out Ozonia, because of my love for the little ones. (*Puts on cloth helmet*)

MRS. DELAVAN. But suppose you never get it worked out?

JASPER. Then some other man building on my foundation must do so. Anyhow, it is the road marked out for me to follow. (*Exits into laboratory at* L.)

(MRS. DELAVAN *shakes head hopelessly, sits at table* R. *and begins to go over books. Enter* SUSAN R.)

MRS. DELAVAN. (*As* SUSAN *places tray with tea-things on table* R.) Well, Susan, I hope the toast isn't burned again. It would be more than I could stand in my present frame of mind.

SUSAN. (*Mournfully, arranging cup and saucer*) It does look sort of black-bordered, Ma'am. I was countin' the carriages in a passin' funeral procession an' forgot to turn it.

MRS. DELAVAN. Well, it does seem to me that when all the breakfast I have is my eleven o'clock morsel of toast—(*As* SUSAN *removes cover from toast*) but it isn't so bad after all.

SUSAN. It was one of the interestin' funerals I've seen since I came to this town to live. You don't want me to set them porch chairs out again to-day, do you?

MRS. DELAVAN. Why not? It has stopped raining.

SUSAN. Yes'm, but it wasn't rainin' yesterday,

yet no one came onto the porch for tea except two women that only ordered one cup between them an' then didn't leave no tip.

MRS. DELAVAN. (*Sighs heavily*) I suppose you're right, Susan. Why should I always be making preparations for a crowd that never comes?

SUSAN. (*Produces a slip of paper from her apron pocket*) Here's the bill the ice-man left. He says he's goin' to lose his job for over-trusting folks if they don't pay up what's owin' pretty soon.

MRS. DELAVAN. (*Makes a strong effort to cheer up*) Oh, well! Maybe if the weather stays bright, business will improve.

SUSAN. Yes'm. That's just what you said this time last month.

MRS. DELAVAN. (*Loses her appetite and desists from eating toast after it reaches her mouth*) This toast does taste rather burned after all. (*Her nerves get the better of her*) Susan, don't stand there with your toes turned in looking like a martyr tied to a stake.

SUSAN. I didn't know I was standin' any way I hadn't ought to.

MRS. DELAVAN. Excuse me, Susan. I'm nervous, I confess, I'll ring when I want you. Take this gown up-stairs and hang it in my closet.

SUSAN. (*Picks up gown*) Would you mind if I borrowed the mornin' paper?

MRS. DELAVAN. (*Hands it to her*) There it is.

SUSAN. The obituaries is generally on page four.

MRS. DELAVAN. (*Softening into sympathy*) You're expecting bad news, Susan? Some of your friends?

SUSAN. No, 'tain't no one in particular, though you never can tell from one minute to the next what dreadful thing may be goin' to happen. That's why I believe in always readin' the obituaries to be prepared for the worst. There ain't nothin' like

keepin' track of the different sad and solemn ways folks has of droppin' off. In last week's paper there was four hearts, two stomachs, one lung an' a cause unknown.

(*A postman's whistle sounds off* L.)

MRS. DELAVAN. The postman, Susan.

SUSAN. An' one inflammatory rheumatism just about your age.

(*Whistle sounds again.*)

MRS. DELAVAN. (*With finality*) I said—the postman!

SUSAN. Yes'm, he's whistled twice. He was tellin' me yesterday when he handed in them bills for you that his youngest had the measles an' the oldest the mumps, but the poor man's got to whistle just the same. (*Exits* C. *and off* L. *She carries the gown and newspaper*)

MRS. DELAVAN. (*Rises and gathers up her books. Goes toward door* L.) You'd better close your door, Jasper. The fumes of those chemicals are going all through the house.

JASPER. (*Stilll wearing the head-covering, looks out at door* L.) Wait until I've blended the warring gases, Ann. The result will be most pleasing to nostrils and lungs alike.

MRS. DELAVAN. I hope so. But it's pretty dreadful in the meantime, dear. Mercy *do* close that door!

(JASPER *closes door* L. *as* MRS. DELAVAN *starts for door* C. SUSAN *enters with letter and pamphlet in her hands.*)

SUSAN. Letter for Miss Mildred, and a catalogue from the undertaker.

MRS. DELAVAN. (*With emphasis*) You may keep the catalogue.

SUSAN. Thank you, ma'am. *I'll* set it on my bureau.

MRS. DELAVAN. Take away the tray now, Susan, and then telephone that order to the butcher.

SUSAN. (*Without moving*) Yes'm.

MRS. DELAVAN. I must finish mending those hall curtains before it's time for anyone to come.

SUSAN. Yes'm.

MRS. DELAVAN. Are you waiting for something?

SUSAN. Well, I thought I'd ought to tell you I'd been out by the geranium beds this mornin' and I think a blight must have struck 'em—they look so spindly. An' the swingin' glass sign down by the gate is broke so bad you can't read what it says, an' somebody's pulled all the roses off that big bush you liked so much an' there ain't one of 'em left.

MRS. DELAVAN. Susan, you should have been a writer of epitaphs.

SUSAN. I have writ some gravestun poetry, if that's what you mean.

MRS. DELAVAN. (*Hastily*) Well, we won't go into the subject further. Don't forget to 'phone the butcher.

SUSAN. (*Beginning to clear off table* R. *as* MRS. DELAVAN *exits* C.) No'm. (*Begins to sing "In the Sweet Bye and Bye" dolefully and with marked tremor. Picks up tray and exits* R. *still singing. After a short pause a bell rings off* R. *repeatedly. Enter* CONSTANCE *in smart motor attire, followed by* CELESTE *and* JOHN. JOHN *and* CELESTE, *carrying wraps and satchels, remain on either side of entrance* C. *while* CONSTANCE *comes down* C. *and looks about inquiringly*)

CONSTANCE. The front door wide open, and no one to answer the bell! Perhaps the folks have

gone on a vacation without taking the trouble to lock up beforehand. Perhaps that's the sort of innocuous place Tuxedobrook is. You needn't have brought all those things in from my car, John. I'm sure they'd have been perfectly safe there.

CELESTE. (*Bored*) What is there I shall do, Mademoiselle?

CONSTANCE. Do as I do: make yourself at home until something happens. It's bound to happen if one only waits long enough. (*Seats herself*) Upon my word this reminds me of the palace of the Sleeping Beauty, without the Beauty to make it interesting. Even the furniture looks as if it had sunk into a hundred year trance. (*Joggles a chair*) Here, wake up and be social! (JOHN *and* CELESTE *yawn, audibly*) Mercy, I hope you two aren't falling asleep along with the furniture. (*Begins to yawn herself*) Now, it's even getting me! How uncanny! Oh, dear, I suppose I should have sent word I was coming as soon as I found myself in this neighborhood! Sh! I thought I heard a clock tick, quite humanly and as if it were wide awake. Did you hear a clock tick, John?

JOHN. Sorry, Miss Darcy, but I didn't.

CELESTE. No teeck, Mademoiselle—no teeck at all.

CONSTANCE. (*With disappointment*) Oh, it was my wrist watch! I forgot I was wearing it.

CELESTE. I hear not a teeck, but something gives me teeckle in my nose. (*Wrinkles nose, then sneezes*) I think it is a something that is dead—under the floor. (*Sniffs disgustedly*) Mon Dieu! Very dead!

CONSTANCE. You're right, Celeste, there does seem to be a—a—something! (OMNES *sniff curiously*) Perhaps that explains the mystery—perhaps gas is escaping from the kitchen range and the whole house is unconscious.

CELESTE. I have a so great afraid, it make the goose feathers to come out all over me!

CONSTANCE. Don't get nervous, Celeste. We must keep our heads. John, I think you'd better look up and down the hall.

JOHN. Yes, Miss Darcy. (*Exits* C. *into hall and looks off* R. *and* L.)

CONSTANCE. (*Indicating door* R.) You might try that door, Celeste.

CELESTE. Oui, Mademoiselle, but I have an afraid!

JOHN. There's no one in sight. (*Re-enters* C.)

CELESTE. (*Peering off* R. *after opening door*) I perceive—a beeg nothing! But now I go to the other door. (*Runs to door* L. *Opens it and screams*)

JASPER. (*Puts head out a moment*) What is it, mother? (*Sees the guests*) Excuse me. (*Closes door*)

CELESTE. (*Wildly clutches* JOHN *as he starts to investigate the apparition at door* L. *as* MRS. DELAVAN *enters* C.) Save me—save me—a burglair—a burglair with mask—there! (*Points toward door* L.)

MRS. DELAVAN. Oh, I suppose you caught sight of my scientist husband in his gas-mask! Please don't be alarmed—he's really most harmless.

CELESTE. (*Much relieved*) If burglair is your husband—again do I return my breath to me.

(CONSTANCE *advances to speak with* MRS. DELAVAN.)

CONSTANCE. Please pardon our informality, Madam. My chauffeur rang the bell several times, but as there was no one to answer we took the liberty of walking in unannounced.

MRS. DELAVAN. (*With formal politeness*) Patrons generally walk right in. Would you prefer re-

freshments served here, or in the larger tea-room beyond? (*Indicates room* R.)

CONSTANCE. (*Starts back in surprise*) Why, is this a public Inn? I was looking for number 33 Archer Street.

MRS. DELAVAN. That is the address of the Tuxedobrook Club House in which you are now standing.

CONSTANCE. Then I beg pardon for my mistake. I am Constance Darcy of Darcyville and I was looking for the residence of an old friend of mother's. She sent us a photograph of it last Winter when we were in California, and I was certain this was the house. It looked exactly like it. We're back in our Pocono cottage for the Summer, and as I was out in my touring car and found it possible to accept a long-standing invitation to visit mother's friend, I—(*As* MRS. DELAVAN *puts her hand to her head and staggers back*) Why, what's the matter? Aren't you feeling well?

MRS. DELAVAN. (*Makes strong effort to recover her self-possession*) A little dizziness, that's all. I didn't recognize you as Constance Darcy—naturally—as I haven't seen you since you were a baby.

CONSTANCE. (*With girlish impetuosity*) Oh, then are you Mrs. Delavan yourself? And do you remember how you used to be mother's dearest chum at school? And how you asked her to teach me to always call you Aunt Ann?

MRS. DELAVAN. (*Stiffly*) Yes, I—do—remember.

CONSTANCE. (*Chilled and hurt*) Oh, I hope I am not *de trop!* Mother must have misunderstood. I—I had expected a very different sort of reception somehow. I'm sorry to have taken up so much of your time. John, Celeste, we'll be going.

(JOHN *and* CELESTE *pick up satchels and wraps as* CONSTANCE *starts toward them.*)

MRS. DELAVAN. (*Convulsively*) No! Wait a moment—please! Under other circumstances I would have been so glad to welcome you, but—now I'm not free to offer you the courtesies my long friendship with your mother led you to expect. But you mustn't rush off without giving me a chance to explain. It is a humiliating confession, but——

CONSTANCE. (*As* MRS. DELAVAN *turns away with bowed head*) I'll stay for a little talk with you—gladly. John, you may run the car about town for a quarter of an hour or so and then return for me. Celeste, I will excuse you also.

(JOHN *salutes and exits* C.)

CELESTE. Oui, Mademoiselle, I think it to be very necessaire I make myself the so beautiful ornament for the tonneau. (*Exits* C. *and off* L. *after* JOHN)

MRS. DELAVAN. It was very considerate of you to send them away. It makes my task of explanation easier.

CONSTANCE. I've drawn my own conclusions, Aunt Ann. Since writing that invitation to mother, you've lost your money somehow and been obliged to turn your home into a public Club House to make both ends meet. Isn't that it? And if that's the case I think it was very splendid and brave of you and nothing to feel humiliated over at all. And of course, under the circumstances, I don't expect you to have either time or room for visitors.

MRS. DELAVAN. (*Determined not to spare herself*) I've never had time nor room for them, Constance, nor means to entertain them, and this Club House mansion was never my own home for an instant.

CONSTANCE. (*Puzzled*) But that photograph you sent to mother—?

MRS. DELAVAN. I said was my own home—I know, but it was an advertising picture of the Club House instead. I wanted your mother to think I was prosperous, and the Club House picture seemed to carry out that idea. All the years I've been writing to Helen, I've tried to give her the impression that my marriage had turned out as successfully as her own. Your father has always piled up his dollars as easily as other men their pennies. I couldn't bear for Helen to guess what a struggle my husband was having for recognition, or to look upon him as a failure, for he isn't—he isn't—and some day he'll prove it to the world! Even the invitation for you to visit me was worded to give the impression of prosperity. You were far away in California at the time, and scomehow I never thought my deception might find me out. It serves me right and I am glad it has happened. Oh, I don't expect you to understand or forgive me, dear. Born with a golden spoon in your mouth, you could never be tempted to pretend you were other than you are.

CONSTANCE. You're mistaken about that, Aunt Ann. I've been tempted to pretend to be other than I am more times than I could count, only I've never quite had the courage to put it through. I've had the feeling sometimes that my money was just a big barrier separating me from lots of people I'd like to know and love but who couldn't see me for looking at the barrier instead, and it's made me wish to pretend I hadn't a penny in the world,—a different sort of temptation from yours, but just as strong. I've felt so alone, so dreadfully alone! That pot of gold at the end of the rainbow is a much over-rated prize when it stands between you and the love of those who surround you.

MRS. DELAVAN. I never thought of it in that way before!

CONSTANCE. The most precious thing in the world, Aunt Ann, is the real friendship of real people, and no one realizes that so much as a rich girl. And because mother looks upon your friendship as real, you would always be the same to her if you lived in a palace or a poorhouse. That's the kind of people we Darceys hope we are. To prove it, I want so much to stay with you a little while, just as mother expects me to. You can find a cubbyhole for me somewhere in this big house I know.

MRS. DELAVAN. I—I haven't told you the whole truth yet. I expect any day to be forced out of the club-house, bag and baggage. I've tried in vain to win the patronage of the fashionable set here in Tuxedobrook, and I'm facing bankruptcy, hopeless and complete.

CONSTANCE. Fine! What splendid news!

MRS. DELAVAN. (*Shrinking*) Splendid news? Why, child, what do you mean?

CONSTANCE. I mean the chance to prove myself a Darcy and a real friend is right upon me.

MRS. DELAVAN. (*Still in the dark*) Chance?

CONSTANCE. Yes. I'm a true daughter of my money-making Dad, and I believe I can scheme out something to make this place popular if you'll only let me stay awhile.

MRS. DELAVAN. But don't you see, dear, that you belong in quite another world than mine? You'd lose social prestige as the guest of the unsuccessful Delavans.

CONSTANCE. (*Snaps her fingers*) That for social prestige! I've always found it weighed more than it was worth. And I wouldn't need to be known as Constance Darcy anyhow. I could choose *nom de promoter*. Aunt Ann, let me invest in you and the Club House.

MRS. DELAVAN. No, no, I couldn't think of allowing my responsibilities to fall on your young shoulders!

CONSTANCE. Why not? To me it would be like taking part in some sort of fascinating game, and besides—it might console me for a big disappointment I've just had in another direction.

MRS. DELAVAN. Oh, a love affair?

CONSTANCE. No, indeed, nothing so romantic. A detective affair—the thing that started me out on this trip in the first place and brought me finally into your neighborhood. A robbery occurred in Dad's office a while ago, and when we got back from California, Dad found the detectives had made just no progress at all.

MRS. DELAVAN. (*Interested*) Well?

CONSTANCE. Dad, like everyone else, has always sort of expected me just to sit back and watch the rest of the world do things, so just to get out of the nonentity class for once, I began to investigate the case on my own account.

MRS. DELAVAN. And didn't your father object?

CONSTANCE. Not in the least. Secretly I believe he wanted me to make good. And I thought I was going to do so at first. I struck a hot trail and followed a certain young man from Darcyville to Rosedale, and from Rosedale to Comport, and from there to Bridgeton—where the trail went cold. My suspect had disappeared as completely as if the earth had opened and swallowed him up. I suspect that he chose an alias and skipped for New York. Daddy has the laugh on me if I can't get no track of him again, and I really see no chance of it. I've failed, miserably failed! So, for goodness' sake, at least let me undertake this Club House project. My pride demands I have one success to tell him about if I have to acknowledge failure in another direction.

MRS. DELAVAN. (*Weakening*) Now, now, you just mustn't put it to me like that!

CONSTANCE. (*Delightedly*) Ha, that means you're going to give in to me! Of course you are! Everyone does, in time. You might as well show me that cubbyhole of a bedroom right now, for I'm going to unpack my belongings and stay.

SUSAN. (*Appears at* C. *from* L.) Mrs. Delavan, the ice man says he'd like to see you in person.

MRS. DELAVAN. (*To* CONSTANCE) There's one of my responsibilities now. Excuse me while I go to placate him. (*Exits* C. *and off* L.)

SUSAN. Are you a visitin' Mrs. Delavan, or did you come for tea?

CONSTANCE. It's business with Mrs. Delavan.

SUSAN. Business? That means collectin', I suppose. An' if it does, you might as well go. If she can't settle with the iceman on his fourth visit, I don't see how she's goin' to settle with you. (*Exits* C. *and off* R.)

CRUGER. (*Heard off* L.) Thank you, Mrs. Delavan, I'll find her.

CONSTANCE. (*Greatly surprised*) Mr. Blainwood of all people!

CRUGER. Miss Darcy, ditto! I thought until today you were still in California, but when your yellow car flashed by mine half an hour ago, I said: "That's Constance Darcy or I'm a liar." I was so rattled I kept on going, and when I turned I'd lost you. But I've been making a house to house canvas ever since and finally ran across your chauffeur and located you here. It seems wonderful to see you again, and within a couple of blocks of my own home! Tuxedobrook is my native village, you know.

CONSTANCE. I'd forgotten that. How awful!

CRUGER. What's awful? Tuxedobrook?

CONSTANCE. I didn't mean that.

CRUGER. Didn't you? Thanks.

CONSTANCE. I meant meeting you.

CRUGER. Thank—er, no! Miss Darcy, how unkind!

CONSTANCE. I didn't mean that either. I meant awful to be discovered by anyone, even a friend, when one had just made up one's mind to disappear.

CRUGER. Disappear? You?

CONSTANCE. Well, er—change my name, I mean.

CRUGER. (*Wincing*) Oh, get married?

CONSTANCE. Goodness! Can't a girl change her name without getting married?

CRUGER. It isn't usually done, and you know you were engaged to a California mine-owner when we last met at that dance at Mt. Cedar Seminary.

CONSTANCE. But I don't know anything of the kind. Papa is the only mine-owner with whom I'm acquainted, and I'm cetainly not engaged to him.

CRUGER. But Miss Harkness said distinctly that a mine-owner had captured you. That's why I had such a grouch when you told me good-bye. I had just heard the news.

CONSTANCE. How much Belle Harkness must have liked you to invent all that!

CRUGER. Well, let's dismiss her, along with her invention. I want to talk about you. May I ask how long you intend to illuminate Tuxedobrook with your shining presence?

CONSTANCE. I think I'd stay long enough to put through a business scheme I've thought out, if I could have the promise of adequate assistance.

CRUGER. I'd gladly start out now and turn handsprings all the way from here to the Court House to assist you in the least.

CONSTANCE. That's very kind and athletic of you, but hardly practical.

CRUGER. Then command me.

CONSTANCE. Very well, I want you to cut my acquaintance.

CRUGER. (*Protestingly*) Miss Darcy!

CONSTANCE. When there are others present, I mean. If I stay to carry out my plan, it must be incognito. You see I'm confiding in you, throwing myself upon your mercy, for if you don't agree to keep my secret, I may as well give it all up here and now. The initial step in the business proposition I have in mind is to completely conceal my identity.

CRUGER. (*Dreamily, having become absorbed in looking at* CONSTANCE *rather than in listening to her*) Your eyes are just as blue as ever, aren't they?

CONSTANCE. What's that to do with business? What were we talking about anyhow?

CRUGER. Business. Initial step. Incognito. Eyes.

CONSTANCE. (*Practically*) Well, we'll omit the eyes!

CRUGER. I'd rather omit the other particulars.

CONSTANCE. Seriously, have you time to answer a few practical questions?

CRUGER. I should say I had! Nothing can unseat me but dynamite until you tell me it's time to go Oh, Miss Darcy, don't you remember that walk we had across the campus in the moonlight while the others were dancing in the Assembly Room?

CONSTANCE. Indeed I do, and how a mosquito bit you on the nose in the midst of it.

CRUGER. Hang the mosquito!

CONSTANCE. We really shouldn't change the subject too often, Mr. Blainwood, it's bad for concentration. Tell me—why doesn't Tuxedobrook society patronize Mrs. Delavan's Club House enough to make it pay?

CRUGER. I don't know all the reasons, but I can make a guess at some of them. To begin with, the

Club House was willed to the town by a stingy old miser purely to spite his relatives. He didn't leave enough for its upkeep and the town doesn't feel obliged to make up the deficiency, especially when there's nothing novel here to attract it. Mrs. Delavan is considered a good sort enough, but under her management the Club House has the reputation of being a dead old hole, a grand old joke, and a prospective home for retired beetles and bats. I solemnly hold up my right hand and declare I'm ready for question two.

CONSTANCE. Do you think the patronage of a social leader might cause the society butterflies to flutter through the Club House doors once more?

CRUGER. It would certainly attract their attention, but who is going to ensnare the leader?

CONSTANCE. You. I want you to bring your mother here for tea one day next week.

CRUGER. You really mean that? You aren't joking?

CONSTANCE. I'm so serious I feel like a prayer-meeting.

CRUGER. What sort of an experiment are you up to anyhow?

CONSTANCE. If I make good you'll know—and so will Aunt Ann, bless her heart! Does your mother come?

CRUGER. That's more difficult than handsprings, but I promise you she'll come if I have to drag her here by her respected and respectable heels.

CONSTANCE. Thank you. (*Gives him her hand*) That's my beginning.

MRS. DELAVAN. (*Enters* C.) Sorry to have kept you waiting so long, but I was called to the telephone and couldn't help it.

CRUGER. I can't tell you, Mrs. Delavan, how much I've enjoyed renewing my acquaintance with Miss Darcy.

CONSTANCE. He's to be in our secret, Aunt Ann —a sort of fellow conspirator. I've made my decision, and the new firm is to begin operations at once.

MRS. DELAVAN. But, child, the idea is so unusual, so bewildering! I really don't know what to say.

(CELESTE *and* JOHN *appear at* C.)

CELESTE. Pardon, Mademoiselle, but we are two time everywhere, and I say to John we should return.

CONSTANCE. And you were quite right, for I have something to say to you both. John, I am about to take a vacation—a being-some-one-else and doing-something-else vacation, and you and Celeste are to take a similar one.

JOHN. (*Salutes*) Very well, Miss Darcy, but I should like to ask——

CONSTANCE. Please don't ask any questions yet, for I haven't thought out the vacation particulars at all.

CRUGER. I'm wondering, Miss Darcy, just what the duties of a fellow conspirator are.

CONSTANCE. Well, his first duty is to employ his leisure moments by dropping in here frequently for tea.

CRUGER. (*Gratified*) I accept the nomination.

CONSTANCE. (*As she begins to talk the curtain starts to descend and she is still enthusiastically outlining her scheme when the curtain hides her from view*) Aunt Ann, we must organize ourselves at once into a ways and means committee. You're the committee, and I'm the ways and means. We must decide on a campaign of publicity—see what we can do to attract the attention of Tuxedobrook in spite of itself. Oh, I've a dozen ideas already!

In the first place we must consider the tea-room. You know the success of a debutante depends largely on the debutante herself. She must be immediately attractive to the eye if she would conquer her little world, and——

Curtain.

ACT II.

TIME: *Ten days later.*

SCENE: *The same room arranged less stiffly. There are three small tables—for two. There are cretonne cushions in the rest chairs. A pretty color-scheme is evident in cushions, candle-shades, flower-holders or other decorations, and also is carried out in the waitress costume of* CONSTANCE. *The effect should be as bright and attractive as possible to afford a definite contrast to the former appearance of the room.*

DISCOVERED: MRS. DELAVAN *and* SUSAN. SUSAN'S *elaborate hat is on slightly awry. She lifts her gown awkwardly out of her way when she walks, and carries an elaborate hand-bag awkwardly.*

MRS. DELAVAN. Walk across the room, Susan. (SUSAN *gloomily obeys*) Well, I must congratulate Miss Darcy! She has transformed you until you look quite like a woman of means.

SUSAN. Maybe I do, but if them dressed-up society women feel as uncomfortable and hypocritical as I do, I'm sorry for 'em—that's all. But as long as I promised to set around at the tables pretendin'

to be one of 'em to build up business, I'll stick to it for this one afternoon.

MRS. DELAVAN. But don't look so unhappy over it, Susan, or the other customers may conclude you find something wrong with our tea.

SUSAN. I can't help it if they do. I made a bargain with Miss Darcy to change my clothes to suit her, but I didn't bargain to change my face and I ain't a goin' to try to.

CELESTE. (*Enters at* C.) Look upon me? *Tres jolie, ne'est pas—tres elegante?* Madam Delavan I turn me about for you to behold.

MRS. DELAVAN. You are very imposing indeed, Celeste.

CELESTE. My Mademoiselle she say to me: "You have the big imagination, Celeste. With the big imagination make yourself the rich Madam Royer. You come for the cup of tea. Also you come to give pastry order for the grande dinner at your country home." So I place me in the frou frou gown Mademoiselle she give me to be rich Madam Royer, and I carry the *parasol de Paris,* and I wear the hat—ah, so divine! I think if Monsieur Royer he could see me—I make him adjust the eye-glass and press his hand to heart. How you like me *en promenade,* Susanne?

SUSAN. I'm sorry to say you look like Jezebel to me.

CELESTE. With the lady I am not acquaint, but I hope she is beautiful. But, Madam Delavan, there is one circumstance for which I have very much the regret.

MRS. DELAVAN. And what is that?

CELESTE. That my husband—Monsieur Royer—is only a ghost man. I wish him to be alive, with a pocketbook that is also alive. Ha, ha, ha!

SUSAN. You'll pardon me, but I don't think it's

respectful to laugh like that when you're speakin' of the dead.

CELESTE. Oh, now—but I would not say exactly he is dead!

SUSAN. He ain't alive and walkin' around, is he?

CELESTE. Not to say to walk around, but——

SUSAN. (*Interrupting her*) Well, if he ain't alive, he's dead, and that settles it. And if you enjoy struttin' back and forth in frills and furbelows that don't belong to you, I don't. My conscience is a prickin' me every minute for puttin' on sech airs. I feel like a lamb in wolf's clothing.

CELESTE. Ha, ha, ha!

SUSAN. What are you laughin' at—me?

CELESTE. Me, I no laugh—at the leetle lamb in the costume *a la* wolf—I laugh—I laugh—because I have the ache in the tooth! Ha, ha, ha!

CONSTANCE. (*Heard outside*) Susan! Celeste! (*Appears in door c., and wears idealized waitress outfit*) Oh, there you are, ready and waiting! Fine!

CELESTE. (*Drops curtsy*) *Oui,* Mademoiselle.

CONSTANCE. But Madam Royer must not curtsy to a waitress, nor address her as Mademoiselle. Both you and Susan must remember that I am plain Nora O'Brien until further notice.

MRS. DELAVAN. My dear, you're adorable—worth going miles to look at!

CONSTANCE. I hope our customers will think so. (*Spreads out her apron proudly*) I designed me all myself

SUSAN. It's queer goin's on an' I've a good mind to back out. I feel like a wicked daughter of Babylon. (*To* CONSTANCE) Of course I know you promised to present me with a new black dress suitable for wearin' at funerals for doin' it, but——

CONSTANCE. And it's to be black *silk,* Susan—think of that, and you're to pick it out yourself.

But, dear me, I mustn't be calling you Susan. Let me see! I think you are Miss Knox, a character actress motoring through Tuxedobrook and stopping off for tea.

CELESTE. Actress! The divine Susanne! Ha, ha, ha!

SUSAN. Actress? Me? Why, I never set foot in a theayter in my life, and am intendin' to have it put on my tombstone that I didn't. I've got it all wrote out. "Here lies the body of Susan Jane Slater, who was never inside of a wicked theayter." I'm willin' to set down an' drink tea like I promised, Miss, but if you expect me to cut any didos like them show actresses do—a kickin' up my heels and losin' my standin' in the church, black silk or no black silk, I ain't a goin' to do it.

CONSTANCE. (*Soothingly*) Not for the world would I have you kick up your heels and lose your standing, Susan. Besides you couldn't in that skirt —it's too tight.

CELESTE. Ah, before me I behold her—the celebrate Mademoiselle the Knox! Ah, I weep that at last has arrive this most great magneeficent occasion! (*Makes deep curtsy to* SUSAN) Ha, ha, ha!

SUSAN. (*Sourly*) You'd better have that achin' tooth pulled or your face might stay that way for life.

CONSTANCE. Now, Miss Knox, you would better sit at this table. (*Indicates small table at* R.) And you, Madame Royer, may take the one opposite. (CELESTE *and* SUSAN *seat themselves as indicated*) If a customer comes in, remember you are just finishing your tea, and that after a second or two, you rise and walk out. That veil a little more over your face, Miss Knox—I want a sort of awning effect to disguise you. (SUSAN *pulls veil forward*) There, that's better! Please remember, both of you, that you are to be seen rather than heard.

SUSAN. If it wasn't for flyin' in the face of that black silk dress—(*Sighs heavily*)

CONSTANCE. Pour yourselves some tea. It's all ready and waiting for you. And I want you to get over the novelty of the situation before it's time for anyone to arrive. (*The honk of an auto is heard off* L.) I wonder if that means patrons already! Mercy, my heart's right in my throat, Aunt Ann! I hope I won't feel so wobbly or I'll spill the tea down someone's back. My knees are actually interfering with each other. It's not a nice way for them to behave at all. Why don't they come if they're coming? (*Exits into hall and is seen looking off toward* L. *Re-enters poutingly*) It's Cruger Blainwood and his mother, and he isn't dragging her by the heels either!

MRS. DELAVAN. Shall I stay or go?

CONSTANCE. Go, by all means. I'm cool as a cucumber now. (MRS. DELAVAN *exits door* R.) Now don't be surprised, Madam Royer—Miss Knox—at anything I may say to you, for I haven't the least idea where my brogue's going to carry me when once I begin it. (CRUGER *and* MRS. BLAINWOOD *appear at* C. *from* L., CONSTANCE, *with her back turned, bending over* CELESTE, *is apparently unaware of their presence.* CONSTANCE *drops into a touch of brogue*) I'll give Mrs. Delavan your dinner-party order with pleasure, Madam Royer. You want five dozen of them little pistache cakes, and the same number of cocoanut, and four dozen fancy assorted. One large chocolate—layer and—(*Turns and gives exclamation of assumed surprise as she sees* CRUGER *and* MRS. BLAINWOOD) May I have the great pleasure to show you to a table?

CRUGER. (*With great cordiality*) Yes, indeed, Miss D—D——

CONSTANCE. (*Hastily, her brogue deepening*) Nora O'Brien.

CRUGER. (*As if suddenly remembering*) Oh, Nora!

CONSTANCE. No, not O'Nora. O'Brien, asking your pardon. O'Brien, with Nora walking by herself in front of it. (*Conducts* CRUGER *and* MRS. BLAINWOOD *to third small table near* C.)

MRS. BLAINWOOD. (*Puts up lorgnette and looks at* CELESTE *and* SUSAN, *who, busy with their tea, are apparently unconscious of her presence*) Flowers! Candle-shades! A striving for artistic effect! Quite a transformation! Do you mean to tell me, er—er Nora, that Mrs. Delavan is still in charge here?

CONSTANCE. Well, she was five minutes ago whin I last laid eyes on her. Be sated, plaze, and I'll be with you as soon as I've finished with a dinner-party order for pastries. (*Returns to* CELESTE)

MRS. BLAINWOOD. (*To* CRUGER, *lowering her voice confidentially*) Dinner-party customers! Dainty service! An air of prosperity! When everyone has been saying Ann Delavan had made a complete botch of running the Club House!

CRUGER. (*Highly pleased*) Didn't I tell you you'd be surprised?

CONSTANCE. (*To* CELESTE) And will you plaze see that I didn't lave out anything before I pass your dinner-party order on to Mrs. Delavan? (*Puts a card before* CELESTE *which* CELESTE *makes a pretense of reading*)

MRS. BLAINWOOD. (*Picks up menu-card from table*) And what an artistic menu-card! Such a surprising and complete change of atmosphere! I understand now, Cruger, why you have formed the habit of dropping in here occasionally.

CRUGER. Yes, isn't she wonderful.

MRS. BLAINWOOD. (*Bewildered by his reply*) She?

CRUGER. (*Holds up a menu-card*) It, I mean—everything.

CONSTANCE. And may I ask did I get the order right, Madam Royer?

CELESTE. (*Hands card back to* CONSTANCE *with air of condescending affluence*) It is extr–r–remely correct.

(MRS. BLAINWOOD *turns to look at* CELESTE *through lorgnette.*)

CONSTANCE. (*With nervous haste*) Then say not another word about it, Madam Royer, for I know you're in a great hurry, and here's your parasol, and Mrs. Delavan will be sure to sind thim to your country place in time, and good afternoon to yez.

(CELESTE *rises, shakes out her draperies, accepts parasol from* CONSTANCE, *and departs with an air of languid magnificence through door* C. *As soon as* CELESTE *is out of sight* SUSAN *rises.*)

SUSAN. I can't stand it. My conscience is hurtin' me an'——

CONSTANCE. (*Bounds to side of* SUSAN *and turns her about, dragging her politely but firmly to door* C. *as she talks*) You mane your rheumatism is hurting you in your lame knee, Miss Knox, and no wonder with the weather we've been having, and remember the black silk that will take it away if you don't take away the black silk before it has a chance, and I hope you'll come again, and I'll help you to the door, Miss Knox. (*Exits* C. *with* SUSAN, *still talking*)

MRS. BLAINWOOD. What an eccentric person, that Miss Knox! It seems to me I've seen her somewhere—perhaps at the horse-show. But I can't

imagine who that Madam Royer is—perhaps one of that exclusive French family of Brentwood Royers who spend most of their time abroad.

CONSTANCE. (*Enters at* c.) I beg pardon for walking away from you, but whin an actress has the rheumatism——

MRS. BLAINWOOD. (*In surprise*) Do you mean to tell me she is an actress?

CRUGER. Does character-parts mostly—servants, eh, Nora?

CONSTANCE. (*With pretended surprise*) And did you niver hear of Miss Knox the actress? Why, she's acting right now ivery minute! And wouldn't she make you laugh with the solemn face of her?

MRS. BLAINWOOD. I imagined, Cruger, that she might be the eccentric spinster sister of Mr. August Knox of the Knox Estates.

CONSTANCE. Now why didn't I know about that Knox before?

MRS. BLAINWOOD. Know about what?

CONSTANCE. Sure me tongue runs away with me whin it shouldn't. Is it English breakfast, or Orange Pekoe, or would it perhaps be chocolate? (*Uneasily to* CRUGER *who has risen*) Plaze don't stand up. I don't require it.

MRS. BLAINWOOD. (*Eyes* CONSTANCE *rather sharply*) Require it? Well, I should hope not.

CRUGER. (*Confused*) Er—er—can't a fellow stand if he wants to, Mater?

MRS. BLAINWOOD. Not if he's supposed to be having tea with me. (CRUGER *sits. Surreptitiously tries to squeeze* CONSTANCE'S *hand, but she eludes him*)

CRUGER. Do you know, Mater, that Nora reminds me quite a little of a society girl I once met out West?

MRS. BLAINWOOD. Cruger, please don't make insane and misleading remarks. (*As she consults*

menu-card, CRUGER *again tries vainly to catch at* CONSTANCE'S *hand*)

CONSTANCE. (*Sweetly to* MRS. BLAINWOOD) Would you prefer toasted muffins or tea-cakes?

MRS. BLAINWOOD. Cruger, what would you like?

CRUGER. (*His ardent eyes on* NORA) I could eat everything in sight.

MRS. BLAINWOOD. I think we'll have English breakfast and—(*With a sudden disturbing recollection*) Oh, no we won't either!

CRUGER. What's the matter?

MRS. BLAINWOOD. I've just remembered my appointment to meet the Committee of Arrangements for the Charity Bazaar, at Mrs. Baskam's! And it had gone completely out of my head. How this absent-mindedness grows on one when once it gets a hold! Sorry, Nora, to have troubled you for nothing, but we can't remain for tea after all, we really can't. I shall be late as it is.

CRUGER. (*Apologetically to* NORA) Of course you've heard, Nora, that there is to be a Charity Bazaar? (*He rises as* MRS. BLAINWOOD *does*)

CONSTANCE. Sure I have, and what better place could there be to hold it in than the Club House ball-room?

MRS. BLAINWOOD. (*Kindly*) Well, my good girl, you certainly have Mrs. Delevan's interests at heart—something very unusual in an employee these days.

CRUGER. But, you see, Nora isn't just a mere employee——

CONSTANCE. (*Warningly*) Ahem!

CRUGER. (*Takes hint*) She's a sort of general factotum.

CONSTANCE. (*With a smile*) "Factotum!" Sure that's the very word that fits me, for I do a little of this, a snack of that, and a smithereen of the other, and I open me mouth and say things

whin I think they need the saying, and I say now there couldn't be a betther place for a Charity Bazaar than Mrs. Delavan's ball-room.

MRS. BLAINWOOD. I like your spirit, Nora, but your little speech is all in vain. The only way our ladies could be induced to hold the Bazaar here instead of in Lyceum Hall, our usual place, would be to remove Lyceum Hall. We have the Lyceum Hall habit, you see. Cruger, let's be off.

CRUGER. But it's a shame to cheat me out of my tea!

MRS. BLAINWOOD. You offered to run my car for me, you know, while Briggs was having his vacation. And I'll promise to come here again with you before the week is out. (*As she turns away,* CRUGER *and* CONSTANCE *clasp hands delightedly a moment behind her back*) Oh, I don't know what Mrs Daskam will think of me! (*Exits* C.)

CONSTANCE. (*Drops brogue as she addresses* CRUGER) Thank you for bringing her!

CRUGER. Did you hear her promise to come again? That's a lot for the Mater to say. But, by Jove, I'm afraid some one will run off with you in the meantime, though, in that little cap and apron.

MRS. BLAINWOOD. (*From outside*) Cruger.

CRUGER. (*Answers*) Coming!

CONSTANCE. Quick! Or she may think you're running off with me yourself.

CRUGER. I wish I were, little Nora! (*Kisses her hand*)

CONSTANCE. (*Elbows akimbo, and with accentuated brogue and manner*) Go long wid you! (*Exit* CRUGER C.)

(CONSTANCE *looks after* CRUGER *a moment. Looks about to see that she is unobserved and drops a kiss on the hand* CRUGER *kissed at leaving. She*

gives a happy little sigh, then begins to gather up the tea things from small table at R.)

MILDRED. (*Heard outside*) Mama! Mama! (*Appears at* C.) Was that actually Mrs. Blainwood? (*Entering room stops and looks around in bewilderment*) Why, is this our little old tea-room, or am I dreaming? You—you're not employed here, are you?

CONSTANCE. I was niver more employed in me life, Miss.

MILDRED. Well, you see I've been on a vacation in Bridgeton and—er—Where's Mrs. Delavan?

CONSTANCE. (*Presents small tray*) I think she's at home.

MILDRED. (*Laughs amusedly*) Well, you needn't bother taking her my card! Tell me—how long have you been staying here?

CONSTANCE. I'm staying here ten days come next Thursday, and if you call me by the name of Nora O'Brien, I'll answer.

MILDRED. Why, you must have arrived the very day I started for Bridgeton to visit Freda Mason!

CONSTANCE. (*Demurely*) Yes, Miss, I do be thinking it was that same day.

MILDRED. (*Surprised*) You know, then, who I am?

CONSTANCE. Many a time it is I've heard the mintion of Miss Mildred Delavan's name.

MILDRED. Well, where on earth did Mama ever pick you up, anyhow? You're the cutest looking thing I ever saw—just as if you'd been designed for Vanity Fair.

CONSTANCE. (*Curtsies*) Thank you for the compliment, Miss, but me looking glass tells me the same ivery time I stop to gaze in it.

MILDRED. Now, now, you mustn't get your head turned, or that will spoil you! You should never presume, Nora, because people speak a few kind

words to you. If you've come here to work, I trust you'll always remember to keep your place.

CONSTANCE. I trust I may, Miss, but I'm that absent-minded I'm afraid some day I'll forget me place, and even me name if some one was to ask it sudden like.

MILDRED. (*Encouragingly*) No, no! You look as if you had more intelligence than that.

CONSTANCE. But you can't always tell just what people are by looking at thim, Miss.

MRS. DELAVAN. (*Enters door* R. *Sees* MILDRED *and cries out in surprised delight*) Daughter! (*Embraces* MILDRED)

CONSTANCE. Faith, Mrs. Delavan, now your daughter has got here, I'll show Miss Knox and Madam Royer onto the piazza for a cup of tea—for I do be thinking they'll make a very good showing from the road.

MRS. DELAVAN. A splendid idea, Nora! (CONSTANCE *removes used cups and saucer from tables and exits* C. *and off* L. *as conversation begins between* MILDRED *and* MRS. DELAVAN) Mildred, I've been so worried about you!

MILDRED. Now, Mama, if you scold just because I stayed on at Freda's and didn't come home when the week-end party was over, you'll hurt my feelings. For look at all that has been going on here and never a letter to tell me anything about it! Why, when I reached the gate and saw the lawn as smooth as velvet, and a gardener putting in new flowerbeds, I thought I must have made a mistake in the place. And inside the house, too, everything is different. How has it all happened? Why, you acted as if we might be bankrupt just before I left home!

MRS. DELAVAN. And so we were, if a little fairy godmother had not appeared to wave a magic wand over my head.

MILDRED. I suppose you mean by that, Mama. someone has backed you financially?

MRS. DELAVAN. Yes, and in such a tactful way that it has not only enabled me to keep my self-respect, but has given me a courage I never had before.

MILDRED. Was it somebody awfully rich—like Mrs. Blainwood?

MRS. DELAVAN. I can't tell you her name until she says I may, Mildred, or I should be breaking my word to her—but it wasn't Mrs. Blainwood.

MILDRED. And she is responsible for all the improvements about the place, including Nora?

MRS. DELAVAN. (*Nods*) Including Nora.

MILDRED. What a stylish little thing Nora is! With Susan clumping about, I've always felt ashamed to have Mr. Hastings call here, but now—Oh, I do hope he'll drop in sometime to-day as he said he might. Where's Daddy?

(HASTINGS *appears at* C. *Sets satchel down by door.*)

MRS. DELAVAN. He's gone to New York in search of some special chemicals. At least he said that was the reason—perhaps all the confusion here had something to do with it—(*She stops, hearing a surprised exclamation from* MILDRED *who has just caught sight of* HASTINGS)

MILDRED. Oh, Mr. Hastings! When did you come in?

HASTINGS. Just this instant. (*Advances,* MILDRED *gives him her hand*)

MILDRED. Mr. Hastings, meet Mama.

MRS. DELAVAN. (*Rather distantly, as she gives him the tips of her fingers*) I've heard Mildred mention you.

HASTINGS. Delighted, Mrs. Delavan.

MRS. DELAVAN. Won't you sit down?

(*All sit in rest-chairs.*)

MILDRED. (*Fools with her hat, which she has removed, smoothes her hair, and shows general flustration and delight that* HASTINGS *has come*) This is quite a surprise, Mr. Hastings. I thought you were over at the Blainwoods' playing tennis.

HASTINGS. They aren't to begin until late, so I thought I'd give myself the pleasure of dropping in here a few minutes in the meantime.

MILDRED. (*Gushingly*) Oh, that was awfully nice of you, and I'm so glad you did, Mr. Hastings! Mama, Mr. Hastings' car is wonderful, and he drives it beautifully! He brought Mrs. Landers and me over from Freda's though I haven't had time to tell you so until this minute.

MRS. DELAVAN. Indeed? That was very kind.

HASTINGS. No, a great pleasure.

MILDRED. And he's been so lovely to Freda and me all this past week, Mama!

MRS. DELAVAN. (*Rather pointedly*) So you're playing tennis at the Blainwoods' to-day, are you, Mr. Hastings? Miss Blainwood is quite a skillful player, I've heard.

HASTINGS. Er—yes, I believe she is in the amateur champion class and——

MILDRED. (*Cuts in, showing plain desire to change the subject*) Oh, whose satchel is that by the door? Someone must have left it here by mistake!

HASTINGS. No, not by mistake, Miss Delavan! Don't you remember the satchel I threw into the car just as we started? That's the one. I suppose it may seem a trifle absurd, but I have the habit of lugging it around with me everywhere. The contents aren't worth a dollar in actual value, but they have a sentimental interest for me—relics of my college days in Ann Arbor, essays, papers, books—all

that sort of thing. By the way, Mrs. Delavan, it has just occurred to me that you might be able to tell me of some good place where I could store it and know positively it would be safe. I—I find it is rather in my way at times.

MRS. DELAVAN. I'm sorry, Mr. Hastings, but I'm afraid Tuxedobrook doesn't contain such a thing as a storage-house.

HASTINGS. Well, er—it needn't be a storage-house, exactly.

MILDRED. (*Eagerly*) Then why not leave it here with us, Mr. Hastings? We've oceans of room, haven't we, Mama? And he could leave it here as long as he liked, couldn't he, Mama?

MRS. DELAVAN. But if something should happen to it while in our care, Mildred?

HASTINGS. I'll take a chance on that. I'd feel much safer to leave it here than in a storage-house.

MILDRED. (*Coaxingly*) Now please say "yes," Mama. I promise you, if you will, to take all the responsibility of looking after it myself. I know just where to put it so Mr. Hastings can get it at a moment's notice, and where nobody else can possibly interfere with it.

HASTINGS. There, Mrs. Delavan—aren't her arguments unanswerable? (*He laughs engagingly*)

MRS. DELAVAN. (*Yields*) She usually gets her own way somehow.

HASTINGS. I thank you.

MILDRED. Then I'm the sole guardian of those mighty Ann Arbor essays and things. My, but I feel important!

MRS. DELAVAN. (*Laughs indulgently*) It's about the first responsibility she ever assumed in her life, Mr. Hastings. Her father and I still make a great baby of her. (CONSTANCE *appears at* C. *with* JOHN *who has on the blue overalls of a gardener and carries a huge pair of clipping shears*

in his hand. CONSTANCE *carries tray with tea, etc.*) What is it, Nora?

CONSTANCE. The new gardener, Ma'am. He wants to show you the new dahlia beds along the roadway.

JOHN. And I'm working out an automobile design in hen-and-chickens I'd like to ask you about.

MRS. DELAVAN. I'm delighted with everything you've done, John. You'll excuse me, Mr. Hastings?

HASTINGS. (*Rises as* MRS. DELAVAN *does*) Certainly.

(MRS. DELAVAN *exits off* L. *from* C. JOHN *follows* MRS. DELAVAN.)

CONSTANCE. (*Advances with tray*) I thought maybe you'd like some tea.

MILDRED. I was just going to ring for you, Nora. You've time for tea before tennis, haven't you, Mr. Hastings?

HASTINGS. It's a great temptation for me to tell myself I have.

MILDRED. (Lovely! (*Moves to table where* CRUGER *and* MRS. BLAINWOOD *had sat previously.* CONSTANCE *arranges tea-service quickly as* HASTINGS *and* MILDRED *take seats*) Anyhow, I like to keep you away from that particular game of tennis as long as I can—you know why.

HASTINGS. Flatterer! As if it made any difference to you!

MILDRED. Do you realize that this is the first time we ever sat together at a table without Freda or some of the rest hovering around to hear every word we said?

HASTINGS. (*Absently, his eyes on* CONSTANCE) I should say so!

MILDRED. (*Pouring tea*) Do you like it strong, Mr. Hastings?

HASTINGS. (*Still thinking only of* CONSTANCE) Tremendously. (*Hastily corrects himself as* MILDRED *looks at him in surprise*) That is, no—weak, very weak.

MILDRED. (*Takes lump of sugar in tongs*) Sweet?

HASTINGS. Very. One lump, please.

CONSTANCE. (*Picks up small vase from table*) This posy is so tired it hangs down its head. I'll bring a fresh one from the garden. (*Starts with vase toward door* C.)

MILDRED. Nora.

CONSTANCE. (*Turning back*) Or maybe two?

MILDRED. I didn' mean that. I want you to take Mr. Hastings' satchel and set it in the laboratory on top of the Japanese chest. It will be safe there for the present.

CONSTANCE. You want me to set it in there?

MILDRED. I do.

CONSTANCE. (*With a saucy toss of her head*) Sure I'd like to be obliging, but it ain't me place to transport the gintleman's baggage whin he's sitting round and able to do it for himsilf.

MILDRED. Nora, I did not expect impertinence from you. I'm surprised!

CONSTANCE. (*After a marked start at sight of satchel*) Oh, is that the satchel you meant?

MILDRED. (*Coldly*) Naturally, since it's the only one in the room.

CONSTANCE. Thin I'm sorry I didn't keep a civil tongue in me head, for now that I see it closer, I feel like saying howdy do to it.

HASTINGS. Ha, ha, ha! Well, you certainly are a character, Nora! Why do you feel like saying howdy do to it, I wonder?

CONSTANCE. Because I've seen it before.

HASTINGS. Nonsense, it's a weather-beaten old article that's been in my family always. I can't

imagine what makes you think you've seen it before. (*Sips tea*) Can you?

CONSTANCE. Faith and I can. It has a piece knocked off a corner like one me father used to own. (*Feels of satchel*) It's rale leather, though, instead of rale imitation, isn't it?

HASTINGS. (*Laughs*) Well, I should hope so!

CONSTANCE. But wid only a squint of the eye, at one glance how should a poor girl like me know the difference? Wasn't I the foolish one to think me old father had iver sported anything as ilegant as that? But it's the twin of it just the same! (*Again feels of bag*)

MILDRED. That will do, Nora. We don't care to hear any more about the resemblance now. I'll set the satchel away myself after I get the key to the chest.

CONSTANCE. That's as you say, Miss Mildred, but all of a suddent I've such a neighborly feeling for it I'm willing to put it anywhere you say.

MILDRED. It's too late for politeness now. But I hope you've learned a lesson, and that is to think twice before you speak once.

CONSTANCE. Indeed, Miss, and I have learned a lesson. Next time I'll look twice at a satchel before I refuse to carry it once. (*Picks up vase again and carries it from the room* C. *and off* L.)

HASTINGS. The little greenhorn makes herself very much at home, doesn't she?

MILDRED. I should say so. She must be taught to know her place and keep it. Mama picked her up from heaven only knows where.

HASTINGS. Not that I minded her palaver. It rather amused me. Don't spoil that pretty forehead with a frown. Do you know you're looking uncommonly well this afternoon?

MILDRED. (*Delighted at his praise*) No. Am

I? And I thought I was all blowsy from that high wind as we drove over.

HASTINGS. (*Reaches across table and takes her hand*) Hard luck, little girl, that I didn't meet you before I met—(*Checks himself as by an effort*) But there—what's the use of regrets when a fellow's got himself in for something he can't get out of with honor?

MILDRED. (*Very sentimentally*) I'm sorry if you're unhappy.

HASTINGS. Are you sorry, Mildred? Are you? (*Gradually draws her closer until finally he kisses her*)

MILDRED. (*Rises and starts away from him*) Oh, you shouldn't have kissed me! What would Fay think if she knew?

HASTINGS. Don't remind me of her. When I've been robbed of so much happiness in meeting you too late—why should you begrudge me just a little now?

MILDRED. I never realized you cared for me so much.

HASTINGS. But now that you do realize it, sweetheart, you've got to be kind to me. I'm planning for us to steal off in my car for some wonderful days together no one will know about but you and me, and—(CONSTANCE *enters at* C. *from* L. *carrying fresh rose in vase*) er—as I was saying, it's about time I got over to that tennis court.

MILDRED. (*Aware of* CONSTANCE, *assumes formal tone also*) Yes, I presume it is. (*Rather impatiently*) Well, Nora?

CONSTANCE. This posy—it smiled so sweet at me I hated to break it from the mother bush.

MILDRED. You needn't have bothered about the rose. We've finished tea.

CONSTANCE. Then I'm sorry I took it from its little brothers and sisters. (*Turns and stumbles*

over satchel as if by accident) Excuse me for steppin' on you! To make up for it, I'll knock the dust off your face. It's thick wid it. I hate the sight of dust. (*Dusts satchel with a handkerchief she pulls from apron pocket*) Wasn't I the greenhorn to think my father iver stowed away his overalls and brogans in anything as stylish as you are?

MILDRED. (*Lowers voice and speaks to* HASTINGS) Are we to have another overflow of words, I wonder?

CONSTANCE. (*Lifts rose from vase*) Since you're not wanted here, little rose, I'll take you along wid me.

HASTINGS. You may give it to me for a boutonniere if you like.

CONSTANCE. May I now? (*He comes close, prepared to have her pin on the rose*) Thank you, but I think it becomes me own complexion better. (*Sticks rose in her bosom. She exits at door* R.)

HASTINGS. Do you know, I rather like her. She's as saucy as they make them. And she looks decidedly above her class to me.

MILDRED. Think so? It strikes me that the nose is very plebian, indeed.

HASTINGS. (*Conciliatingly*) Perhaps you're right about that. (*Picks up hat*)

MILDRED. Must you go?

HASTINGS. Yes, but not from choice. I wish I could be with you forever.

MILDRED. (*Inwardly delighted*) You mustn't say such things.

HASTINGS. Walk with me as far as the gate.

MILDRED. How nice of you to want me to!

(*They walk toward door* C.)

HASTINGS. That satchel must be put in a safe place and under lock and key. You understand that, don't you, Mildred?

MILDRED. Of course, and I'll attend to locking it away myself.

HASTINGS. You won't let it set around here very long, will you, to have people speculating on what may be inside of it?

MILDRED. The minute I come in again I'll see to it.

HASTINGS. That's the girl! I think the world of all that old college junk. (*They exit together* C., *and off* L.)

(CONSTANCE *opens door at* R., *cautiously—peeps in, then enters.*)

CONSTANCE. Come along, Celeste. (*Enter* CELESTE R. CONSTANCE *indicates satchel*) There it is. Take a good look at it while you have the chance. (CELESTE *sets bag on a chair and begins to examine it*) Am I right? Isn't it that damaged one of mine I turned over to Daddy for use at the office?

CELESTE. It has on the outside the familiar look. On the inside, how can I go to say until I see it open?

CONSTANCE. You remember my reason for discarding it, don't you?

CELESTE. *Oui,* Mademoiselle. It was made sick by the man that throw so angry the baggage. (*Quickly examines bag again, and finds the broken corner*) The same damage in the same place! *Qui,* Mademoiselle, it is the bag that did belong to you—the same. Now, I could swear it is the same.

CONSTANCE. Oh, if I only had X-Ray eyes for one little minute! For of course it's possible for two satchels of the same size and make, to have the same corner broken and in the same way. And it doesn't seem natural for such an extraordinary discovery to be made as simply as this. Perhaps I'm wronging someone terribly to even suppose such

a thing. But if I find out that it is the same satchel, Celeste—I've more important business in Tuxedo-brook than ever I supposed I had. Not a word of this to Miss Delavan or anyone! You are free to ornament the piazza again.

CELESTE. (*Arranges hat and draperies*) Where now she sit there alone—that so sad and funny, Susanne the Knox. But it is to me the great pleasure to sit at table and be the grande dame—when I turn my head and look the other way from her. (CELESTE *exits door* R.)

(CONSTANCE *makes an attempt to open the satchel, but perceives that it is locked; lifts it to test its weight.* MILDRED *enters* C., *and catches her with the bag in her hand.*)

MILDRED. Well, Nora, and what are you doing with Mr. Hastings' satchel?

CONSTANCE. I want to be respictful and obliging and put it where you towld me to, and where I'll know how to find it in case it's wanted.

MILDRED. Well, I'm glad you realize how rude you were to Mr. Hastings. You should always make it a point to be respectful to every one. Bring it along into the laboratory, and I'll unlock the chest.

CONSTANCE. Yes, Miss Delavan, I'm bringing it, and I'm going to show Mr. Hastings the respict to keep an eye on it so it can't get away widout my knowing it, be it morning, noon or night! (*Picks up satchel and starts toward door* L., *with it*)

ACT III.

TIME: *A few weeks later.*

SCENE: *Same room with tea-tables removed. It is evening. Room prettily decorated with*

flowers and shaded candles. Table at R. *for punch bowl and glasses. Divan at* L. *Decorative screen stands back of table at* R.

DISCOVERED: *In full evening attire, chatting and moving about,* MRS. HERRICK, FREDA MASON, ALICE STANLEY, BERT SHAFER, SYLVESTER CRANE, MILDRED DELAVAN *and others.* MILDRED *is the center of a little group.*

FREDA. Why, Mildred, that big new tea-room is splendid, and I wouldn't have recognized the ball-room at all!

BERT. By jove, the ball-room's corking!

MRS. HERRICK. It's a most perfect background for a Charity Bazaar and dance.

SYLVESTER. (*Languidly*) With all the assembled houris drifting in and out, it looked to me like a scene from the Arabian Nights.

FREDA. Girls, imagine being dubbed "houris!" How enchanting!

MRS. HERRICK. (*To* MILDRED) Your mother must have had in an expert decorator from New York to work such wonders.

MILDRED. No, nothing of the kind. Mama would scold me for telling, I suppose, but that little Irish Nora designed the whole thing.

SEVERAL VOICES. Nora?

MRS. HERRICK. Is it possible

MILDRED. Indeed it is. Mama consults her about everything quite as if she were a private secretary or something. I think it's a mistake to make so much of her myself, for in some ways she's as stupid and Irish as you can imagine.

SEVERAL VOICES. Oh, of course! Naturally. (*Etc.*)

CONSTANCE. (*Enters at* C. *Carries a basket laden with fans. She retains brogue always when*

necessary to maintain her disguise. She wears an Irish peasant costume much idealized) Fans! Fans! Fans! for all the ladies, with the compliments of Mrs. Delavan. (*Strikes coquettish attitude and holds up a fan*)

ALICE. Souvenirs! How charming! (OMNES *with exclamations of interest draw near* CONSTANCE)

BERT. (*Examing fans*) By Jove—corking! If I were a maiden fair I'd cop that red one.

FREDA. (*Laughs*) Why does a man always like red?

CONSTANCE. For the same reason he likes a shilla'y or a bu'l-dog. It's the nature of the brute. (BERT *and* SYLVESTER *laugh at her reply.* CONSTANCE *picks up a delicately shaded fan*) Here's a fan that cries out for a lady with dreamy eyes to keep it company.

SYLVESTER. May I claim it for Miss Blainwood?

CONSTANCE. You may. (*The fan reaches* FAY *by way of* SYLVESTER)

FAY. Thanks! Nice of you, Sylvie, to offer it to me.

CONSTANCE. This one to cool the blush on the cheek of a brunette. (*Holds up a yellow fan*)

ALICE. Let no one have it but myself! (*Claims the yellow fan*)

CONSTANCE. This for a beguiling blonde. (*Offers pale pink fan to* MILDRED)

MILDRED. Thanks, Nora, but I prefer to choose one for myself. (*Picks up another fan*)

CONSTANCE. (*Humorously*) There's no accounting for tastes. (OMNES *laugh at the rejoinder. Picks up a brilliantly-colored fan*) This one would coquet the heart out of a Spanish bull-fighter.

MRS. HERRICK. Oh, that's for me! My great, great grandmother was a Castilian beauty!

CONSTANCE. (*Presents fan*) Sure your great, great grandmother lives again in yourself.

MRS. HERRICK. You were born in Ireland, weren't you, Nora?

CONSTANCE. Let me see. My great, great grandmother was—(*Stops short*) Well, if she wasn't born in Ireland, she wasn't too far away to throw kisses at the shamrocks.

MRS. DELAVAN. (*Appears at* C.) Everybody wanted who is to take part in the La Patria Cotillion!

FREDA. Oh, I didn't know it was time for it!

MILDRED. Who leads? You, Mr. Sylvester?

(OMNES, *except* MRS. HERRICK, ALICE *and* CONSTANCE, *exit at* C. *after* MRS. DELAVAN. *Patriot Dance-music heard off* R. MR. DELAVAN *enters from laboratory at* L. *and looks at retiring crowd in bewilderment.*)

MR. DELAVAN. Wh—why something seems to be going on here!

CONSTANCE. (*Kindly, as she notes his confusion*) Wouldn't you like a fan, Mr. Delavan, to blow the cobwebs from your brain? (*Puts a fan in his hand which he wields mechanically*)

MRS. HERRICK. It's our annual Charity Bazaar and Dance. Didn't you know about it?

JASPER. I remember now Ann did say something about dress clothes. Too bad I should have forgotten! In the company of ladies arrayed in all the tints of the solar spectrum, I feel quite out of place.

MRS. HERRICK. Oh, but you shouldn't, Mr. Delavan.

ALICE. No, indeed! You look so picturesque! I think the eccentricities of genius are simply fascinating. Your coat has such a talented way of always being buttoned crooked.

MRS. HERRICK. And in any case, I'm sure we should feel honored to have such a well-known scientist in our midst.

ALICE. When I read those newspaper headlines about the success of the Ozonia experiments, I could hardly believe it was our Mr. Delavan who had leaped into such sudden fame.

MRS. HERRICK. My husband says it will mean a fortune to you in time.

JASPER. (*Not heeding them, still troubled about his appearance*) I really can't hunt up those dress-clothes now. I'm working out several complex formulæ and I think I'll go up to the attic where Ann won't run across me. Yes, I'm quite certain she won't run across me in the attic. Nora, you won't mention having seen me to Mrs. Delavan?

CONSTANCE. Mention it? Why should I? Comfort yourself I'm blind as a bat hid under a bushel measure 'til you've gone out that door. (*Indicates door* R.)

JASPER. (*Relieved*) Thank you, Nora. Good evening, ladies. (JASPER *exits door* R.)

MRS. HERRICK. (*To* ALICE) Absolutely unconscious of having on shoes that didn't match, wasn't he?

ALICE. Yes, just like that dear Mr. Edison!

MRS. HERRICK. Is it true, Nora, that some one helped Mr. Delavan put Ozonia on the market—advanced him the money?

ALICE. And was it a woman, Nora?

MRS. HERRICK. We've heard vague hints—rumors—that it was.

ALICE. We're asking out of pure disinterested friendship for Mrs. Delavan, of course.

CONSTANCE. Well, I ain't in the habit of listening at doors, but from what I picked up—(*Pauses significantly*)

MRS. HERRICK *and* ALICE. Well?

CONSTANCE. I ain't saying that it was a woman and I ain't saying that it wasn't.

MRS. HERRICK. Mercy, Nora! That's worse than no answer at all. Nevertheless I feel sure the rumor was true. Probably some rich widow who fell in love with him in spite of his having a wife and child.

CONSTANCE. And why should it be a rich widow in love wid him? Why shouldn't it be a poor spalpeen of a working girl who wasn't, but who belaved in his genius?

MRS. HERRICK. Impossible! Mrs. Delavan told me herself a few weeks ago that Mr. Delavan could never get anywhere with Ozonia without the expenditure of several thousand dollars. How could a mere working girl lay her hands on that much money?

CONSTANCE. Sure if I knew that, wouldn't I be laying hands on some of it mesilf?

MRS. HERRICK. Well, you see, then, you must be wrong. Shall we go back to the ball room, Alice?

ALICE. Yes, I think we'd better see what's going on. (ALICE *and* MRS. HERRICK *exit* C. *and* R. JOHN *enters at* C. *from off* L. *carrying huge punch-bowl*)

JOHN. The punch, Miss O'Brien.

CONSTANCE. (*Without brogue*) Set it on the table, John.

JOHN. Yes, Miss O'Brien. (*Sets punch bowl on table at* R. *Enter* MRS. DELAVAN C.)

MRS. DELAVAN. (*To* CONSTANCE) My dear, have you seen Jasper anywhere?

CONSTANCE. (*To* JOHN) Be careful not to spill it over the side.

MRS. DELAVAN. (*Goes toward laboratory door at* L.) He really should make his appearance in the ball-room. (*Opens door at* L. *and looks in*) Not there.

CONSTANCE. (*As* JOHN *starts toward door* C.) You look very nice, John, even if you do walk as if you had a poker up your back and one up each leg.

JOHN. That's exactly the way I feel. I'll be glad when you order out the car again, Miss Dar—Miss O'Brien, I mean—and I can climb back to my wheel.

CONSTANCE. I know you will, John, and I shan't ask you to stand the strain of butlerdom much longer.

JOHN. Thank you, Miss O'Brien. Another bowl in the green parlor, you said?

CONSTANCE. Yes, on the table between the windows.

(JOHN *exits at* C.)

MRS. DELAVAN. I'm trying to think where Jasper can be. I'm so proud of him, and I think he ought to be seen!

CONSTANCE. (*Dropping back into brogue again*) I wouldn't hurt me eyesight looking for him.

MRS. DELAVAN. You know where he is.

CONSTANCE. You can't expict me to incriminate mesilf.

MRS. DELAVAN. You do know, you little rogue, only you choose to shield him.

CELESTE. (*Enters at* C. *from off* L. *carrying punch-glasses which she sets in front of bowl*) Oh, Mademoiselle, if you could only have the nearby ear to hear the ladies—what they spik of you! (*Laughs*)

CONSTANCE. Of me

MRS. DELAVAN. Which ladies? Where, Celeste?

CELESTE. Above the stair—the ladies as I help to adjust slipper and arrange the hair. They say: "That leetle Irish Nora—she is too pretty for a maid." They say: "She is dangerous!" They

say: "She keep not the place of a maid and she go to turn the head of that young Monsieur Blainwood." They say: "Some one should spik to hees mother."

CONSTANCE. Ha, ha, ha! Oh, Aunt Ann! If you only knew how that tickled my funny bone!

CELESTE. And that Madam Blainwood—you shou'd see how she fix the wide open eye on me! (*Illustrates*)

CONSTANCE. She did not recognize you as the dinner-party lady, I hope?

CELESTE. Almost she remember I am the rich Madam Royer, but I gaze at her with the eyes so eenocent, she cannot think I go to deceive her. She raise the lorgnette—she put her head on the side with curiosity—so! Then she let fall the proud shouldair and dismees me—pouff! She blow me away like I am a leetle pinch from the powdair-puff. I am only a maid!

CONSTANCE. I hope Susan will evade discovery as successfully. I don't know whether she's on duty in the green parlor or not.

MRS. DELAVAN. Since she's made up her mind to leave me, she can't be counted on at all.

CONSTANCE. If she is there, don't rest until you've made her smile, Celeste. I don't want her looking like a mourner at a funeral.

CELESTE. Oui, Mademoiselle, I will make her smile in the green parlor if it ees to teeckle her in the so melancholy rib. (*Exit* C. *and off* R.)

MRS. DELAVAN. (*To* CONSTANCE) It's all going splendidly. My dream is fulfilled. Tuxedobrook has opened its arms to me at last.

CONSTANCE. (*Without dialect*) Stupid Tuxedobrook! It should have done that long ago. Will you have a fan with the compliments of Mrs. Delavan. (*Gives* MRS. DELAVAN *the last of the fans*)

MRS. DELAVAN. (*Accepts it*) What won't you

think out next? I never saw such a campaign of advertising in my life. You're wonderful.

CONSTANCE. (*With satisfaction*) Anyhow they didn't hold the Bazaar in Lyceum Hall as they vowed they would.

MRS. DELAVAN. It would have broken my heart if we hadn't landed it for the Club House. It's the biggest event of the season.

CONSTANCE. I knew that, and that's why I made up my mind to close Lyceum Hall.

MRS. DELAVAN. (*Amazed*) You closed it?

CONSTANCE. By me troth, I did. Not being able to stay here a hundred years or so, I took a short cut to success.

MRS. DELAVAN. So it was you who induced the new owner of Lyceum Hall to close it to the Bazaar?

CONSTANCE. It was I who induced her to close it.

MRS. DELAVAN. The new owner is a woman, then?

CONSTANCE. (*Demurely*) You're looking at the new owner now.

MRS. DELAVAN. You?

CONSTANCE. Confession is good for the soul. I've always wanted to dabble in real estate, and Lyceum Hall was my opening dab. Next Winter I may turn it into a skating-rink.

MRS. DELAVAN. And you actually bought Lyceum Hall in order to close it for my sake! How can I ever repay you for all you've done for me? And how can I ever repay you for what you've done for Jasper?

CONSTANCE. You owe me nothing, Aunt Ann, and if anyone on earth ever deserved a boost, Uncle Jasper did. Besides I've had a million dollars' worth of fun out of Tuxedobrook already, and more to follow. Wait 'til I make Daddy buy an interest

in an up-to-date skating-rink at inflated prices! Oh, I've more schemes than you could carry in a broken satchel to show him he's not the only Darcy with a head for business.

MRS. DELAVAN. That's right—try to cover up your unselfishness; try to make it a matter of head, not of heart! You darling! (*Takes* CONSTANCE *in her arms*)

CONSTANCE. Don't embrace your Irish factotum! She has no objections in person, but it isn't done in the best society.

CRUGER. (*Enters at* C.) At last! I've been looking for you everywhere, Miss Darcy.

CONSTANCE. (*Mischievously assumes dialect for the most of her conversation with* CRUGER) "Nora" if you p'aze, in case there should be ears.

MRS. DELAVAN. Do sample the punch, Mr. Blainwood. I hope it's a success. (*Exits* C. *and off* R.)

CONSTANCE. For what rayson did you wish to see me?

CRUGER. Isn't the wish reason enough? But perhaps it was because I wanted to ask you to weave a witch spell over the bowl before I drink.

CONSTANCE. No sooner said than done. (*She gets behind the punch-bowl and makes weird passes over it as she intones the verse*)—

Come ye witches, black as coal,
Drop your magic in the bowl,
A pinch of heart, and a taste of soul.
Come ye witches black as coal!

CRUGER. Stop that, you little Irish enchantress, or I'll take a header and drown myself in the bowl right before your eyes!

CONSTANCE. (*With mock solemnity*) I wouldn't have you drown yourself for anything!

CRUGER. (*Highly flattered*) Wouldn't you? Wouldn't you? Why not?

CONSTANCE. You'd spoil the taste of the punch.

CRUGER. (*Crestfallen*) You grow more cruel by the minute. I'm sometimes afraid that when you're through with your little masquerade, you'll be through with me too.

CONSTANCE. And why not?

CRUGER. Nora! You were only teasing when you said that!

CONSTANCE. Maybe I was. Maybe I'm telling the truth when I confess I've been jealous this night of the fine ladies who had the right to dance with you in the face and eyes of everyone, while I could only look on lonesome-like from a distance, and sigh, and sigh!

CRUGER. And now you're making fun of me! How much longer must I wait before I'm free to tell all Tuxedobrook who you really are?

CONSTANCE. Oh, I'm not through with being Nora yet by any means!

CRUGER. If you had only been yourself all this time—think of all the gay parties I might have arranged in your honor. Instead of Nora who dared not be seen out with me, Miss Darcy could have honored me and my pet roadster through all these sunshiny days.

CONSTANCE. But there are years ahead of sunshiny days, and only one chance to be Nora. Let me be Nora while I may! Why, it's a liberal education to look at life from below stairs instead of from above, to see it without its company manners! When you're only Nora, people are their real selves with you—they have no occasion to be anything else. You see them, good and bad, genuine and sham, just as they are. (*Assumes brogue*) Some show extra kindness to the poor little greenhorn, heaven save her simple soul! And others put her in her proper place and keep her there. I've been sat upon and snubbed because of me humble station

in life, and been as saucy as I liked in return, because how shou'd I know the difference? (*Abandons brogue*) No, no, I shall never be sorry I was Nora. Why, as Nora I'm seeing dayligh in directions where before I was blundering around in the dark! And what doesn't Nora dare do if she likes? Why, they tell me she's even cast a flirtatious eye on the proud and only son of Mrs. Hector Blainwood, ignorant little Irish nobody that she is! (*Drops into brogue again*) To stop me flow of language I'll take a cup of punch wid you.

CRUGER. Here's to Nora! (*They take punch together*)

CONSTANCE. I'll tell her good-bye with sadness.

CRUGER. (*Sets down glass*) Delicious, but not half so delicious as you. Nora, I love you!

CONSTANCE. Don't spake words to me like that, even if you do not mane thim!

CRUGER. But I do mean them, and you know it, and that I want the whole world to know it too. But you don't give the snap of your fingers for me.

CONSTANCE. Sure, whin I niver could learn how to make me fingers snap, how should I know whether I care the snap of me fingers or not?

CRUGER. There, you're laughing at me again!

CONSTANCE. (*With underlying seriousness*) And if I am laughing at you, I'm laughing too at meself. For a poor colleen cannot think of business and love-making at the same time without damage to one or the other. I've business of importance on hand before the clock strikes twelve, and I've a feeling that if I stay here talking to a handsome gintleman much longer, here's danger of a slump in the market, and a panic in the business world!

CRUGER. (*Delighted*) Nora!

CONSTANCE. Be off with you, or I'll take ivery word of it back!

CRUGER. (*Laughingly*) I throw up my hands and hit the trail for the ball-room. (*Exits* C.)

(*The music, until now heard faintly from* R. *ceases.* HASTINGS *passes* BLAINWOOD *as he enters* C. *Looks back after him, then significantly at* CONSTANCE, *who is arranging the punch glasses.*)

HASTINGS. Oho! So Blainwood has been making love to you again, has he? It's not the first time I've caught him at it. (CONSTANCE *ignores him. She hums a little Irish tune, picks up her basket and starts to exit* C. HASTINGS *intercepts her*) Now, now, you shan't run away from me like that!

CONSTANCE. I've this basket to fill. You shouldn't be stopping me.

HASTINGS. You pretty Irish witch! Why will you never give me a moment alone with you? You must know you always go to my head like a glass of wine. Why, I'm crazy about you! You have all the beauties in there backed off the ball-room floor for looks.

CONTANCE. And where do you keep that stolen bit of the blarney-stone, Mr. Hastings? Let me kiss it.

HASTINGS. Why waste the sweetness of your lips on something that isn't alive, Nora? (*She evades him as he tries to take her in his arms*)

CONSTANCE. Stop! The likes of you shouldn't make love to the likes of me!

HASTINGS. You should be proud to have a real gentleman notice you, Nora.

CONSTANCE. Sure, that's why you found me talking with Mr. Blainwood!

HASTINGS. Why is it you don't like me?

CONSTANCE. Maybe I know too much about you.

HASTINGS. (*Uneasily*) Just what do you mean by that?

CONSTANCE. How could an ignorant Irish spalpeen like me mane anything at all?

HASTINGS. While there's no one around, let me kiss you.

CONSTANCE. While there's no one around—(*Gives him a smart box on the ear as he bends toward her*) Take that with me compliments. (*Runs off at* C. *where she meets* FAY BLAINWOOD) Faith, it was almost a collision! (*Exits off* R. *in hall*)

FAY. (*Advances toward* HASTINGS, *agitatedly*) Ralph, you're not angry with me. Are you?

HASTINGS. Not with you. Of course I knew it was your mother who was responsible for your refusal to dance with me—but that didn't make it less of a humiliation.

FAY. I'm sorry you were humiliated, dear. But it has just spoiled my whole evening, too, I want you to know that. You must win mother's confidence again some way, Ralph. That's the only way out for us.

HASTINGS. Easier said than done. She turned against me without reason, didn't she?

FAY. Why, of course I think so or I wouldn't be here talking with you now.

HASTINGS. Just because I borrowed a little money about town while awaiting those dividends from my copper mines—a perfectly legitimate thing to do, she begins demanding letters of reference from my freinds and relatives—as if I were a flunkey or something applying for a job!

FAY. But she didn't mean it that way at all, I know she didn't. Naturally, since father died, mother feels more responsible for me than ever and more anxious that I shouldn't make a mistake in the man I choose to marry. Of course I know she's inclined to go too far with it, but after all

why should it hurt your pride to answer a few questions about your family—it would be quite a simple matter it seems to me?

HASTINGS. No, no, Fay. I draw the line at being cross-questioned like a criminal on trial. I thought you loved and trusted me, sweetheart.

FAY. I do, Ralph, I do. It's only that mother——

HASTINGS. It's come to the point where we must take things into our own hands, that's all.

FAY. What do you mean by that?

HASTINGS. I mean that some day next week we'll slip quietly out of town and get married.

FAY. (*Recoiling*) Oh, but not without mother's consent?

HASTINGS. Certainly, without her consent. We'll ask her forgiveness afterwards.

FAY. No, I couldn't do that.

HASTINGS. Why not?

FAY. It would hurt her so, and she's been so kind and dear to me always.

HASTINGS. Do you mean that if it came to a choice between us—she would come first?

FAY. Don't put me to such a test as that—please! Please!

HASTINGS. Sweetheart, why should you hesitate? My love will make up to you for the loss of everything else.

FAY. Oh, I wouldn't mind relinquishing all my money—everything—but mother's love. Somehow I can't bear to lose that.

HASTINGS. (*Plainly jarred, but speaking with caution*) What do you mean by saying you wouldn't mind relinquishing your money? What money?

FAY. Why, my inheritance!

HASTINGS. Your inheritance?

FAY. Yes, father left it in his will, you know, that should either Cruger or myself marry without

mother's consent, our money reverts to her, all of it.

HASTINGS. (*Makes patent effort to regain his self possession*) It seems a little strange you never mentioned such a will to me before. Not that it is of the slightest consequence to me, of course—I'm thinking only of you—but are you certain such a ridiculous stipulation could stand in law?

FAY. In this particular case I'm certain of it. Father was a lawyer himself, you know, a very celebrated one, and must have known what he was about.

HASTINGS. Well, then, for your sake, I'll furnish your mother with the particulars she requires.

FAY. I'm so glad to hear you say that. Then our engagement can be announced at once! (CONSTANCE, *with replenished tray of fans, appears in* C. *in time to hear* FAY *speak of engagement. She shows intense interest and surreptitiously slips behind screen back of punch table at* R.) And that just reminds me that I wanted to ask you for my pearl and diamond necklace before mother noticed I didn't have it on. I didn't tell her I'd given it to you to wear next your heart for fear she'd think we were foolishly sentimental—especially in her present frame of mind. So please fasten it on for me, dear.

HASTINGS. Well, er——

FAY. You do wear it next your heart, don't you—after all the lovely poetry you quoted when you asked me for it?

HASTINGS. Of course I do—as a rule, but I haven't it with me now because I noticed one of the stones was loose and left it with Lambert in Bridgeton to reset.

FAY. Well, that's different. Of course that was very kind and thoughtful of you, even if it does mean I'll probably have words with mother before the evening is over.

SYLVESTER. (*Enter at* C.) Well, Miss Will o' the Wisp, I've located you at last! This next is our dance, I believe.

HASTINGS. (*Formally, to* FAY) I'm afraid I've been detaining you. (*Exits* C. *and off* R.)

FAY. Forgive me, but I'd quite forgotten you, Sylvie.

SYLVESTER. (*Calmly philosophical*) I knew you had. Girls always forget me, especially girls I couldn't forget if I wanted to. I've no personality, you know—never had, nothing about me to make people remember me. Have to remind people I'm alive as a rule. Even at school they never used to take notice whether I was present or absent, it made so little difference. I'm a negative quantity—a major chord with a third left out. I wish I were a gay adventurer, instead of such a colorless, blotting-paper kind of chap.

FAY. A gay adventurer? What on earth—why, Sylvie, I've known you for years, and never had a suspicion you wanted to be anything but just the good, kind, steady boy you've always been.

SYLVESTER. Fellow gets tired of being a good, kind, steady boy, when he realizes that isn't the sort of chap a girl admires.

FAY. But I'm sure everyone is fond of you, Sylvie, very fond. I am myself—(*Hastily*) In a sisterly way, I mean.

SYLVESTER. Don't need sisters. I have six of them already.

FAY. (*Embarrassed*) Oh, if it's a sweetheart you want, I'll try to help you——

SYLVESTER. Please don't. Never cared for but one girl in my life. She liked me too—in a sisterly way, of course. Perhaps if some one else hadn't come along—but someone else did come along, and I faded off the blackboard as usual.

FAY. (*Somewhat remorsefully*) I'm sorry, Sylvie.

SYLVESTER. No, not really sorry. I never impress anyone deeply enough for that.

FAY. (*Still more remorsefully*) But you ARE so good!

SYLVESTER. (*Ironically resigned*) Thanks.

FAY. And you dance like an angel!

SYLVESTER. Thanks again, but angels don't dance. They aviate instead. (*Exit* FAY *and* SYLVESTER C. *and off* R.)

(CONSTANCE *emerges from behind screen. Goes up* C. *and looks off. Sees something that makes her fairly scamper back to shelter of screen again. After a moment,* HASTINGS *enters. Chews at a cigarette and marches nervously up and down.* CONSTANCE *peeps from behind screen just as he is examining a pearl and diamond necklace he draws from his pocket. Dance music is heard from off* R. HASTINGS *returns necklace to pocket. He starts for door* C. *and meets* MILDRED, *entering. Enter* MILDRED C. *Dance music heard off* R.)

HASTINGS. Mildred! I was just this moment wondering where I could find you.

MILDRED. Oh, what matters a dancing engagement more or less? You've been having a charming little tete a tete with your fiancée, I suppose?

HASTINGS. There, there, little one, don't be jealous!

MILDRED. But I am jealous. You have me wound around your little finger in spite of my knowing you're engaged to Fay Blainwood. I just can't seem to help myself.

HASTINGS. Speaking of Fay, I've good news for you—news that will please you if you still love me as you've said you do.

MILDRED. What could be good news for me?

HASTINGS. I'm done with Fay Blainwood forever.

MILDRED. (*Eagerly*) You've broken with her?

HASTINGS. (*Cautiously*) Sh! In my own mind, though I haven't told her so yet.

MILDRED. Broken with Fay? No, it isn't possible!

HASTINGS. Why should you be so surprised? Haven't I always told you I loved you best?

MILDRED. But you said you were in honor bound to keep your word to her. I can't understand what could have happened.

HASTINGS. Nothing happened, only I—well, I suddenly realized that when a man cares as much for one girl as I do you he simply hasn't the moral right to marry another one.

MILDRED. Oh, no—there's something else—I know there is—but I don't care. I don't want to know what it is. I just want to believe you love me best whether you do or not. I've been so unhappy over Fay! When are you going to tell her it's all over between you?

HASTINGS. I don't think I'd better tell her in person. I'm soft-hearted, and I don't want her to cry me into going on with it after all, you know.

MILDRED. Of course you don't!

HASTINGS. So it's best I should get right out of town and let her know the truth by mail.

MILDRED. You're going away?

HASTINGS. Yes, and take you with me. Just for a few weeks, that's all. Then we'll come back and settle down. Well, what do you say to it?

MILDRED. Wh—why, I'd never thought of being married out of town with no big church wedding, nor bridesmaids nor anything!

HASTINGS. Well, if those things mean more to

you than I do—(*Shrugs his shoulders and starts to walk away*)

MILDRED. (*Hastily*) But they don't. How soon do you want to go?

HASTINGS. Well, to avoid explanations to Fay, I think we'd better skip tonight.

MILDRED. Tonight? Oh, no!

HASTINGS. Tonight or never. There now, sweetheart, it's a bit sudden I know, but you must let me decide what's best for both of us. Where's that satchel?

MILDRED. What satchel?

HASTINGS. What satchel? Great heavens! The one I left in your care, of course.

MILDRED. Oh, that old one with the essays and things? I thought you meant a traveling satchel. Why, that old one will be safe right where it is until we get home from our honeymoon!

HASTINGS. I don't doubt it would be safe enough, but it's a sort of superstition with me to take it along whenever I go any distance from home.

MILDRED. Then of course we can take it along. It's locked away in the Japanese chest there in Papa's laboratory.

HASTINGS. Then let's get it right now. (*Starts for door* L.)

MILDRED. We can't, just this minute.

HASTINGS. Why not?

MILDRED. The key to the chest is up in my room somewhere.

HASTINGS. Somewhere? Don't you know where?

MILDRED. Yes, I put it in the top drawer of my chiffonier in an old jewel-box. Shall I get it?

HASTINGS. Right away, sweetheart—please. And while you're about it gather up a few duds and climb into a motor-coat. If you work fast we may

be able to manage it all without attracting attention.

MILDRED. Oh, that part of it will be all right! By the time we're ready to start, the tableaux will have begun and they will keep everybody busy for an hour. Of course I hate to leave father and mother but we'll come back soon, won't we?

HASTINGS. Of course. Go now, and make sure of that key first of all.

MILDRED. May I leave a little note for mother telling her we're to be married?

HASTINGS. Not for anything. Er—after it's all over we can send her a telegram.

MILDRED. That will make it all right. I just didn't want her to worry.

HASTINGS. Get ready as fast as you can. In the meantime I'll be seen around in the crowd and drift back here in time to meet you.

MILDRED. You're sure you love me better than Fay?

HASTINGS. Sweetheart, am I not proving it? (*Kisses* MILDRED)

MILDRED. I'll be ready in no time. (*Exits* C. *and off* L.)

HASTINGS. (*Sotto voce*) Little fool! (*Exits leisurely* C. *and off* R.)

(CONSTANCE *emerges from behind screen. Stands deeply thoughtful for a moment, then exits into hall. Is seen signalling off to someone with her handkerchief. Comes back into room and in a moment* CRUGER *enters at* C. *from* R. *and comes down to join her.*)

CRUGER. Was that little wigwag meant for me?

CONSTANCE. It was, and I'm so glad you caught it. Listen! I've been making a human dictograph of myself behind that screen. My brain has recorded several valuable bits of Mr. Hastings' con-

versation—the last of which was with Mildred Delavan. Poor, deluded little Mildred!

CRUGER. He was making love to her on the sly, I suppose.

CONSTANCE. (*Nods*) That's one of his favorite occupations.

CRUGER. I've always told Fay I thought him a cad.

CONSTANCE. He's worse than a cad. He intends to make his getaway tonight while the tableaux are going on, and he's persuaded Mildred to go along with him.

CRUGER. Just on general principles I think I ought to call him out and pummel him within an inch of his life.

CONSTANCE. (*Gets between him and door* c.) You'd spoil everything with such tactics.

CRUGER. Forgive me, little chief, I lost my head for a minute, that's all.

CONSTANCE. I don't blame you in the least, but since he has been so busy making a trap for himself, why not let him walk into it undisturbed?

CRUGER. You think he doesn't suspect you've had him under surveillance?

CONSTANCE. I know he doesn't. He's even made love to me.

CRUGER. That settles it. I've *got* to pummel him.

CONSTANCE. Wait! I thought you really wanted to help me.

CRUGER. Forgive me again, and I'll obey your commands without question. What can I do to help you?

CONSTANCE. Roll up your sleeves and kidnap a lady.

CRUGER. (*Starts back, dismayed*) What?

CONSTANCE. That is—if it becomes necessary.

CRUGER. (*Eagerly*) Does the lady happen to be you?

CONSTANCE. No.

CRUGER. Then I declare a strike.

CONSTANCE. Do you call that obeying commands without question?

CRUGER. The strike is off.

CONSTANCE. Thank you. The young woman to whom I referred was Mildred. She has gone to her room to pack up as Hastings told her to. Now, I want you to camp out on the stairs until she starts down to join him. Of course when she sees you she'll wish to avoid being seen, and wait for you to move away. But you're not to move. You're to remain planted right in her way.

CRUGER. But if she gets desperate and tries to pass me?

CONSTANCE. Then detain her by the charm of your conversation.

CRUGER. That's something my conversation never had.

CONSTANCE. Don't let her get by you, even if you have to kidnap her and lock her up in the library to prevent it.

CRUGER. (*Humorously*) A few gags, brass knuckles and coils of rope might come in handy. But never mind, if I undertake the job, I'll put it through somehow. But when am I to set my prisoner free?

CONSTANCE. You can take it as a signal when you hear me laugh at the top of my lungs.

(*Dance music at* R. *ceases.*)

CRUGER. I'm a bloody Bluebeard until then. But what will you be doing in the meantime, little fellow conspirator?

CONSTANCE. Keeping my wits about me. I must

be ready to checkmate Mr. Hastings no matter what move he may make! (*Smilingly takes up tray*) Fans, wid the compliments of Mrs. Delavan! (*Takes a fan in her hand and smiles back over her shoulder at* CRUGER, *as she exits* C. *into hall and off* R.) Fans! Fans! Fans!

ACT IV

TIME: *Later the same evening.*

SCENE: *Unchanged from* ACT III.

DISCOVERED: ALICE, *entering, followed by* BERT. ALICE *wears a beautiful evening gown the tulle drapery of which drags in torn ribbons behind her.*

ALICE Oh, of course, Bert, I know you didn't trample on me purposely, but your good intentions don't mend my gown! (*Pins up a bit of torn drapery,* BERT *looking distressfully on*) I need more pins. You don't happen to have a stray one anywhere, do you. (BERT *produces a huge pin from under lapel of his coat*) I said a pin, Bert, not a golf club. There, I'll gather up the rest of my tatters with this brooch. (*Completes pinning up hanging streamers of tulle*)

BERT. (*Hopefully*) I know I'm a pretty bad dancer, but don't I step out a bit more gracefully than I did?

ALICE. Read your answer, Bert, it stands before you.

BERT. (*Ruefully*) Trod on you like the wine-press, didn't I?

ALICE. To tell the truth, Bert, I feel exactly

like a shredded wheat biscuit. You walked up my back, trod the buckle off my slipper, caught your sleeve-link in my hair—and still imagine you can dance.

BERT. No, I don't. All the conceit is taken out of me.

ALICE. Then that's one thing accomplished to pay for the wreck of my Paris gown.

BERT. By jove, you look corking in that gown!

ALICE. In what's left of it, you mean But may be I'll hang together for the balance of the evening. If I don't, they'll have to send me home in a bandbox—that's all.

BERT. If you'll just try the one-step with me again in the side corridor with no one around, I'll whistle the music.

ALICE. Have you actually the audacity to ask me to dance with you again?

BERT. I've got the hang of it now.

ALICE. What makes you think so?

BERT. (*Imploringly*) I'd love to dance with what's left of you, Alice.

ALICE. But why select *me* for the lamb to be led to the slaughter? You know I never could resist an appeal to my sympathies.

BERT. I want a chance to redeem myself in your eyes.

ALICE. Oh, you don't need redeeming personally, Bert, it's only your feet that are incorrigible. (*Allows him to take dancing position with her. He begins to whistle dance music. They make a bad start*) Not that foot forward, Bert—the other one. (*They make another start*)

(*Enter* MRS. BLAINWOOD C.)

MRS. BLAINWOOD. No more dancing! The tableaux are about to begin. You're one of the

young ladies to take part in The Bachelor's Dream, aren't you, Alice?

ALICE. Yes, though I feel more like a nightmare. (*Indicates her torn costume*)

(*Enter* MRS. DELAVAN C. *followed by* MRS. HERRICK, FAY, FREDA *and others.*)

FAY. The stage is all ready for the opening tableau, Mama.

FREDA. And it looks just ravishing!

MRS. BLAINWOODD. Well, I'm glad to hear it. Really, Mrs. Delavan, until I took charge of the tableaux, I never realized what such a responsibility meant. There are a thousand things to think about—the lights, the music, the costumes, the make-up——

SUSAN. (*Propels herself in unexpectedly from* R. *She wears new black silk dress and turban. On the back of the turban is plastered a large rosette in black and white with black streamers reaching to her waist and looking not unlike an undertaker's emblem lifted from a door knob*) Excuse me for interruptin', but as long as I've been settin' in one spot for the last half hour——

MRS. DELAVAN. (*Apologetically*) Oh, Susan! I had forgotten entirely you were waiting to say good-bye. (*Explains to others*) Susan takes the midnight train out of town. She's leaving me to get married.

MRS. HERRICK. (*Kindly*) Is that so? How interesting! (*To others*) Susan used to be in my mother's service, you know. (*To* SUSAN) I never supposed you'd be capable of anything so frivolous as matrimony, Susan.

SUSAN. The state of matrimony is a pure and holy one accordin' to Scriptures.

ALICE. Oh, I just love weddings! Anybody's wedding.

FREDA. I suppose you have your white dress and veil all folded away and ready for the occasion?

SUSAN. Yes, Miss, my dress has tissue paper stuffin' in the sleeves, an' it's folded neat in a pasteboard box, but I ain't goin' to wear one of them dragglin' veils, an' my dress ain't white. It's lavender rep—dark colored.

MRS. HERRICK. Susan! Susan! Lavender for a bride?

SUSAN. Yes'm. With black trimmin's.

MRS. DELAVAN. Surely not black trimmings, Susan, for such a festive occasion?

SUSAN. Yes'm. I consider it more respectful.

MRS. HERRICK. Respectful to whom?

SUSAN. To Mr. Simpkins, mu future husband. I'm carryin' an undertaker with a tombstone business on the side.

MRS. HERRICK. Well, I'm sure we all hope you'll be very happy, Susan.

SUSAN. I ain't expectin' to be happy.

ALICE. You don't expect to be happy?

FREDA. Why not?

SUSAN. It wouldn't be becomin' to my future husband's occupation. (*Produces a bunch of business cards*) I've got some of his cards here if any of you should ever need anything in his line at reasonable prices, an' the new Fall styles is just comin' out now. (*Begins to distribute cards, beginning with* MRS. BLAINWOOD)

MRS. BLAINWOOD. Thank you, but I don't think I shall have occasion to use it very soon.

SUSAN. (*As she goes on handing out cards*) You never can tell, an' it's everybody's duty to keep their lamp a burnin'. An' talkin' about lamps reminds me—if any of you care to send me anything for a weddin present, you might make it candlesticks. Mr. Simpkins says folks steal 'em where you'd least

expect it, an' he's always short. Well, I must be goin'.

MRS. DELAVAN. Then good-bye, Susan, and I hope you'll be very, very unhappy.

SUSAN. Thank you, ma'am, I hope so. Good-bye all.

OMNES. Good bye. (*Exit* SUSAN C. *and off* L. *The moment she disappears each one present lifts card and drops it to the floor as by one impulse*)

SLYVESTER. (*Appears at* C.) All on for tableau one!

ALICE. (*Joining in a move all make toward door* C.) Oh, do you hear that?

FAY. They're going to begin!

MRS. BLAINWOOD. And if anything goes wrong, I'll be blamed for it.

FREDA. I never was so nervous—I know I'll giggle and spoil everything in my tableau.

MRS. BLAINWOOD. Fay, dear, pull out that lock of hair over your ear—it's too flat.

FAY. Where's Nora? I thought she was to attend to us.

ALICE. Yes, dear me! Where is Nora?

(OMNES *exit* C. *and off* R. *chattering ad lib. Enter* HASTINGS *at* C. *looks around and starts to exit again when door at* L. *opens and* CONSTANCE *enters. She has on the motor coat worn by* MILDRED *in* ACT II *and over her head is draped a white motor veil revealing only her eyes.*)

HASTINGS. Mildred? (CONSTANCE *puts a warning finger to lip as fearing he will be overheard*) There's no one around. Take off that veil—you look like the Klu Klux Clan. (CONSTANCE *shakes head refusing to doff veil*) Well, where's the satchel?

CONSTANCE. (*In a whisper*) Here. (*Steps to door* L., *reaches in and brings out satchel*)

HASTINGS. Fine! (*Picks up satchel*) But how light it feels! What's the matter? (*He sets down the satchel, opens it and finds that it is stuffed with wads of tissue paper. He runs his hand through it excitedly, gives a look at outside of satchel to see that it is the same, then turns to* CONSTANCE, *appalled*) Mildred, I've been robbed! Look at that! Worthless wads of paper!

CONSTANCE. (*In horrified half whisper*) No!

HASTINGS. (*Furiously*) Yes, when you said it would be safe—that you'd look out for it.

CONSTANCE. (*Quickly removes veil and speaks to him partly in the accents of* NORA) I have looked out for it.

HASTINGS. Nora! What does this foolery mean? What were you doing in there?

CONSTANCE. (*Smiling pleasantly*) Maybe I was dusting the shelves, and maybe I wasn't.

HASTINGS. You—you knew I was looking for Mildred?

CONSTANCE. I did.

HASTINGS. Where is she?

CONSTANCE. Packing up her duds. (*Removes motor-coat and throws it over the back of a chair*)

HASTINGS. (*Vexed*) Why did she let you in on this? And what did she—or you—do with the contents of that bag?

CONSTANCE. Sure I can't answer one question while you're askin' me half a dozen.

HASTINGS. This is no time for practical jokes. Who emptied out that satchel?

CONSTANCE. (*With smiling deliberation*) Well, I'm not saying it was old Mr. Delavan, and I'm not saying it wasn't; but if it was Mr. Delavan that did it in his absent-minded way, sure he would niver

desthroy thim college essays unless he forgot himself entirely.

HASTINGS. Do you mean to tell me old man Delavan has been tampering with my property?

CONSTANCE. Do you want to know what I really think?

HASTINGS. Of course.

CONSTANCE. Well, thin, if you want to know what I really think—I think he had nothing at all to do with it.

HASTINGS. Then who——

CONSTANCE. Mesilf. I emptied out thim college essays, and stuffed the bag with papers in its place to make it keep its ilegant shape.

HASTINGS. College essays? Why, that was only a bluff I made to Mildred. There were twenty thousand dollars' worth of bonds and securities in that bag at the very least. I knew Mildred wasn't over-weighted with brains, but I didn't think she was such an utter fool as to confide in you. Why in heaven's name doesn't she come?

CONSTANCE. I suspicion a better lookin' man than you are may have blocked the way.

HASTINGS. You're talking nonsense and you know it.

CONSTANCE. Maybe.

HASTINGS. You're not the ignorant simpleton I took you for—I see that.

CONSTANCE. Faith, your eyesight is improving!

HASTINGS. Where are those bonds and securities?

CONSTANCE. Don't be alarmed—I know where they are.

HASTINGS. Well?

CONSTANCE. But I couldn't lay my finger on thim this moment to save me.

HASTINGS. Don't torment me like this—I'll not stand for it.

CONSTANCE. There's plenty of chairs handy if you'd rather sit.

HASTINGS. (*His fingers working as if he could scarcely refrain from strangling her*) Don't drive me too far, or I may be tempted to force the truth out of you.

CONSTANCE. Don't craw-fish your hands at me like that, or I'll run! (*In desperation,* HASTINGS *picks up satchel and thrusts his hand in it again*) What'll you give me to tell you what you'd be afther finding out?

HASTINGS. (*Straightens up and regards her with renewed interest*) So, it's a hold-up, is it?

CONSTANCE. Call it what you like.

HASTINGS. Upon my soul, you interest me! I confess you fooled me down to the ground at first, but now I've caught on. You are a woman of my own world, a woman who knows the seamy side of life the same as I do—who lives by her wits as I do. How much will you take to tell me all you know.

CONSTANCE. A string of pearls and diamonds in me hand.

HASTINGS. (*Tremendously taken back*) But I —I haven't such a thing.

CONSTANCE. What's the matter with the one you took out of your pocket to look at a while ago?

HASTINGS. (*Completely nonplussed*) You—saw me?

CONSTANCE. As plain as day.

HASTINGS. What were you doing?

CONSTANCE. Looking at you.

HASTINGS. From where?

CONSTANCE. I'm not telling all I know, though maybe that's little, whin it's told.

HASTINGS. Mildred doesn't know I have that necklace, does she—or whose it is?

CONSTANCE. Not unless you told her.

HASTINGS. But she knows where you put my securities, doesn't she?

CONSTANCE. She doesn't know I touched thim. The key she wint to look for, ain't where she put it because one day I borrowed it, and I've niver put it back where I tok it from.

HASTINGS. So, all this time she's been searching for something she isn't going to find, and that's what's keeping her?

CONSTANCE. Maybe not that alone. Whin a young lady starts to elope in the style to which she has been accustomed, it sometimes takes a long time. And besides, I'm in no hurry for her to get here. And you don't want her to see this whin she comes! (*Picks up satchel and sets it inside door* L.)

HASTINGS. That means you've deliberately interfered with the carrying out of our plan. Why?

CONSTANCE. I ain't sayin' it is me reason, and I ain't sayin' it ain't; but you're a good-looking man whin the light ain't too strong! And haven't you made love to me? Didn't you tell me only to-night I bate all thim that was dancin' in there for looks? And didn't you try to kiss me?

HASTINGS. At last I begin to catch on! If I run away with any girl, it's got to be you, eh, Nora?

CONSTANCE. Right you are! If you run away with anyone, it's got to be me.

HASTINGS. Then let me tell you, girl, I fall for you right here and now! You've a nerve that does you credit. You'd be the smoothest partner in the world for a man playing my kind of a game! Why, if you show the brains in playing for big stakes that you've shown in double-crossing me—there isn't a confidence woman traveling that could beat you.

CONSTANCE. That diamond necklace in me hand would spake louder than all thim flattering words.

HASTINGS. I swear that as soon as we're out of

here and in my car together the necklace will be yours.

CONSTANCE. Why not now?

HASTINGS. I want to make sure of you, my lady.

CONSTANCE. Maybe you'll be regretting that I ain't Miss Delavan.

HASTINGS. Bah! I looked on her as a pretty toy to break and throw away, that's all. I picked her up because I found old lady Blainwood held the purse strings in that family, and—but what's the use of wasting words over them? You're the only one I want. Come, let's get the goods and be off.

CONSTANCE. No, no! Whin you can be so decateful to others—the necklace in me hand!

HASTINGS. (*Hands it over to her*) There, now, are you satisfied?

CONSTANCE. (*Pockets the necklace*) Well, I'm feeling better.

HASTINGS. Now, then, those securities!

CONSTANCE. Ha, ha, ha!

HASTINGS. Why do you laugh like that?

CONSTANCE. Because thim securities is more than an hour's journey away from here.

HASTINGS. What? You sent them away?

CONSTANCE. (*Nods*) I wanted thim where they'd be safe.

HASTINGS. You—you figured out where I got them?

CONSTANCE. Well, I figured out you didn't git thim at college.

HASTINGS. It's all up with you if you're fooling me! I say it's all up—(*Approaches her threateningly*)

CONSTANCE. You might as well calm yoursilf, for I can't get ready to lave the house and take you to thim before midnight.

HASTINGS. (*Grasps her by the wrist*) You promise you'll take me to them then?

CONSTANCE. I promise.

(MILDRED *appears in door* C.)

MILDRED. Ralph! Oh, Nora, I wasn't expecting——

CONSTANCE. (*As* MILDRED *comes down*) And ain't you lookin' at the beautiful tableaux, Miss Delavan?

MILDRED. (*In a high state of nervous tension*) I don't know that my movements are any concern of yours, Nora.

CONSTANCE. (*Saucily*) Maybe they are, and maybe they ain't. (*Exits* C. *and off* L.)

MILDRED. Dearest, I'm terribly upset! Everything's gone wrong!

HASTINGS. (*With assumed interest*) Wrong?

MILDRED. Yes. After I" packed my satchel, I started to get the key to that Japanese chest and —and—Ralph, the key had disappeared!

HASTINGS. (*With feigned alarm*) No!

MILDRED. Yes. Of course I must have put it somewhere else and forgotten it.

HASTINGS. (*Soothingly*) Of course. Don't worry. It will turn up somewhere.

MILDRED. (*With great surprise and relief*) Oh, aren't you a darling to take it like that? I was simply terrified when I found the key was gone. I thought you'd be so angry with me I wouldn't be able to stand it. But that isn't all that's bothered me. When I started down stairs to ask you what to do, Cruger Blainwood had himself spread across them smoking a cigarette. He insisted on my sitting down there beside him, when he's never shown the slightest interest in me in all his life before. He simply would not let me go—kept detaining me on one excuse and another until I nearly went wild. But at last I broke away. Listen, I think we may

be able to get inside that Japanese chest after all. There's a bunch of keys hanging just inside the laboratory door and——

HASTINGS. (*Detains her as she starts for door*) Well, never mind now. There's no hurry.

MILDRED. (*Amazed*) No hurry? But I thought——

HASTINGS. (*Glibly*) Yes, but in the meantime I've had an accident. My car—I stepped out to see if everything was all right and found it stalled completely. It may take hours before it can be made to budge.

MILDRED. Why, how dreadful!

HASTINGS. Yes, isn't it? It means a complete change in our schedule. I'll go see what can be done about it, and send a note to you by Nora when I'm ready for you to join me. Of course in the meantime that key is sure to turn up. I—I was bribing Nora to be a go-between when you came in and found me with her.

MILDRED. I wondered what you were talking about. Of course the longer we wait the harder it's going to be for me to get away—if the tableaux are over, for instance! And I'm still bothered about that key, so let's try to open that chest with one of the others now.

HASTINGS. (*Detains her as she starts for door* L.) Don't! I'm sure I heard your father—or someone—in there a moment ago.

MILDRED. Father never pays the slightest attention no matter how much I flutter around. I'm terribly uneasy, somehow, until I lay eyes on that satchel again and——

HASTINGS. (*Takes her by the arm and pulls her away from door* L.) Stop! Don't mind about the satchel, I say. I'm in no mood to be crossed. If you had eyes in your head you could see for yourself that my nerves are all on edge.

MILDRED. (*Amazed and hurt*) Ralph! I never dreamed you could speak to me like that—to any girl like that.

HASTINGS. I didn't mean to lose my temper, but that car going wrong, and the delay, and the chance of running into Fay again—pardon me, sweetheart, won't you?

MILDRED. (*On the verge of tears*) Yes, of course—but when you told me the first thing to do was to find the key——

HASTINGS. It's still the first thing to do—that's why I don't want any fumbling around down here. You go upstairs and take another look, then mingle in the crowd until Nora finds you with a note. If the worst comes to the worst, we can leave the satchel where it is a few days just as you suggested.

MILDRED. That seems to me a lot more sensible. Why, there's my motor-coat! (*Points to coat discarded by* CONSTANCE) I've been looking for it everywhere. How on earth did it come here?

HASTINGS. How should I know how it came here?

MILDRED. Forgive me for asking foolish questions. I forgot how nervous you were. Well, I'll take one more look for that key——

HASTINGS. (*Ushers her off at* C.) That's right —run along now until you hear from me. (*She exits at* L. *from* C., *carrying motor-coat.* HASTINGS *looks after her, then starts down toward door* L. *Just as he is about to open it,* CELESTE *appears in door* C. *and hails him. He gives a nervous start and comes away from door*)

CELESTE. (*Enters, carrying a folded note in her hand*) Is it Monsieur Hastings I spik with?

HASTINGS. (*Impatient at the interruption*) Yes, what do you want?

CELESTE. That lettle Nora—she geef to me this billet doux to present to Monsieur when there is no

one to rubber in the neck to behold. There. (*Hands him the note and turns as if to go*)

HASTINGS. Wait. It may need an answer. (CELESTE *obediently pauses*) What's up, I wonder? (*Opens and reads note*) Don't tell me this is true!

CELESTE. (*Shrugs her shoulders*) How can I go to say? I make not the habits to see the inside of the billet doux of another peoples.

HASTINGS. But she hasn't really jumped the town, has she?

CELESTE. (*With dignity*) I see her not to jump anything.

HASTINGS. She's still in the house, isn't she?

CELESTE. No, Monsieur. Nora O'Brien she has make the depart to return nevair. Oh, me, I nevair see anything so gay like Nora! She take off the cap and throw it down—so! Then the apron—so! Then she dance on them—so! (*Illustrates above statements with abundant pantomime*) Then she fly to get a pen, and she write and write and write very fast. Then she say: "Celeste, geef to Monsieur Hastings when I am gone." I follow not on her footstep, but when Nora O'Brien she is gone, I find you as she request and geef to your hand the leetle billet doux.

HASTINGS. Gad, what an easy mark I've been! She's skipped—double-crossed me—and she's got it—the necklace—the money—everything!

CELESTE. What? You go to accuse that so good leetle Nora she is not honest?

HASTINGS. Shut up, you gabbling French parrot!

CELESTE. Oh, how terrible your angair!

HASTINGS. (*More to himself than to* CELESTE) I'll follow her until I find her—and when I do she'll pay and double pay for this!

CELESTE. I am afraid of you. I make my legs

to step very fast away from you. (*Walks out at* C. *and off* R. *with exceeding swiftness*)

(HASTINGS, *deeply agitated, paces the floor quickly for a moment, and then as if he had come to some important conclusion, starts rapidly for door* C.)

CRUGER. (*Steps into door and blocks it just as* HASTINGS *is about to exit at* C.) What's the rush, old chap?

HASTINGS. Nothing, nothing in particular. A bit bored with everything, that's all—just about to take my leave.

CRUGER. I'm glad I caught you in time. A charming young lady from out of town has expressed a wish to meet you. She'll be here in just a moment.

HASTINGS. You'll have to excuse me, Blainwood. Some other time. My car is waiting and——

CRUGER. (*Detains him politely as he starts to go*) I've got to keep my word and present you, you know. It won't take but a minute.

HASTINGS. (*Fiercely*) A minute or an hour is all the same to me. I don't want to meet the girl. I'm done with the sex.

CRUGER. (*With assumed surprise*) Why, what's the trouble?

HASTINGS. (*More cautiously*) Nothing, only—I—I've important business to attend to and must be off.

CRUGER. Rather late in the evening for a business call, isn't it?

HASTINGS. (*Testily*) I don't know that my personal affairs concern you any, Blainwood, but—I've got to get back to Bridgeton at once.

CRUGER. (*Still manages to prevent* HASTINGS *from leaving the room*) Come, I can never persuade the young lady that a Bridgeton engagement

is more important than meeting her. It doesn't sound reasonable. She couldn't understand that social usages in Bridgeton may be different from those in Darcyville.

HASTINGS. (*With a start*) Darcyville?

CRUGER. I imagined you might know the town.

HASTINGS. But I don't. I was never there in my life.

CRUGER. Why, she said you had been!

HASTINGS. (*With growing uneasiness*) She? Who?

CRUGER. The young lady who compliments you by wishing to meet you. Sit down. She'll be here directly.

HASTINGS. No. I don't feel like meeting strangers, I tell you.

CRUGER. What better cure for a grouch than a chat with a pretty girl?

HASTINGS. (*As* CRUGER *once more bars his exit by putting a hand on his shoulder*) Don't talk piffle, and oblige me by taking your hand off my shoulder.

CRUGER. (*Taking even a firmer hold*) The young lady said I was to present you to her without fail, and I'm going to do it, Hastings, if it has to be by main force.

HASTINGS. (*With a snarl*) I get you. You're up to some infernal trick or other, but I'm not to be snared so easily. You can't hold me here against my will.

CRUGER. Sure of that, are you?

(CONSTANCE *steps in quietly at* L. *and stands unobserved by* HASTINGS. *She has on evening gown over which hangs a beautiful wrap.*)

HASTINGS. I'll show you whether I am or not. (*He grapples with* CRUGER *and they struggle to-*

gether, moving through C. *into hall as* HASTINGS *tries to escape*)

(MRS. HERRICK *enters hall from* R., *turns and calls off* R.)

MRS. HERRICK. Help! Stop them! Help!

(*As* CRUGER *forces the struggle back into room,* OMNES *enter and stand watching them, perplexed.*)

BERT. (*Amid excited murmurs from crowd*) What is it? A wrestling match?

FREDA. Of course, they can't be in earnest!

ALICE. Yes, but they are! And they'll hurt each other.

MRS. BLAINWOOD. Nonsense! They can't be quarreling!

HASTINGS. Let me out of here, let me out of here, I say, or by heaven I'll—(*He reaches in hip pocket and draws pistol but before he has a chance to bring it forward* CONSTANCE, *from behind him, reaches out and wrests it from his hand. Though concealing her face from crowd with a fan, she has been intently watching the struggle from the first*)

CONSTANCE. Will you now?

HASTINGS. (*Turns to find* CONSTANCE *covering him with his own weapon*) Nora!

OMNES. Nora!

CRUGER. (*To* HASTINGS) The lady who wished to meet you—Miss Darcy of Darcyville.

HASTINGS. (*Clutches at his throat, speaks gaspingly*) You—are—Miss Darcy?

CONSTANCE. (*Rapidly, still covering him with pistol*) Yes, daughter of Harvey Darcy from whom you stole certain funds intended for transfer

to the bank and which you found in an old satchel used expressly for that purpose. You held on to that satchel and its contents too long, Hastings, for by identifying both I was enabled to identify you. (*She takes a step toward him*) I promised a while ago to take you to where those securities were. I'm ready to keep my word. They're back safe in my father's office at the Darcy Wille Copper Mills. Do you still wish to go along with me?

HASTINGS. (*Apparently cowed, backs toward* R.) Lower that gun, please. I—I give up. I'm beaten. I'll face the music. (*Suddenly puts out his hand and presses a button in wall* R. *All the lights go out*)

OMNES. "The lights!" "He's snapped them off." "Mercy, I'm afraid!" (*Exclamations ad lib*)

CRUGER. *Hang* it all! Where's that button? (*The lights come on again.* CONSTANCE *at* L. *is seen with her arm extended and her finger presses against button in wall* L. *showing she is responsible for the illumination*) Constance, he's escaped!

CONSTANCE. (*Cool and smiling*) To his car, where he'll find a detective waiting to give him a warm reception.

CRUGER. (*Hardly able to believe it*) No.

CONSTANCE. You didn't suppose my father's daughter would spoil it at the last!

MRS. BLAINWOOD. (*Advances toward* CONSTANCE) Your father's daughter? But how could Nora, a waiting maid, be Harvey Darcy's daughter? I confess I'm bewildered.

MRS. DELAVAN. (*As* CONSTANCE *is about to speak*) Let me explain, dear. (*She takes* CONSTANCE *by the hand and leads her forward*) The little Nora with whom you are all familiar concealed her real identity for purposes of good. Not only has she stopped the evil career of Ralph Hastings

both in Tuxedobrook and elsewhere, but she has proven to both Jasper and myself a friend in need and a friend indeed. In short—I hold by the hand a girl full of madcap mischief, but with the kindest, tenderest heart in the world!

CONSTANCE. Forgive my little masquerade, all of you, won't you? I want you to accept me now as just myself—Constance Darcy. If you will, I promise to wrap Nora in lavender and put her on a great high shelf, and keep her there forever and forever!

CRUGER. No, not forever! Nora must be brought down from that shelf every once in a while. I can't give up Nora entirely, for it was Nora that promised to marry me.

MRS. BLAINWOOD. (*Amazed*) Cruger!

CRUGER. (*Comes to side of* CONSTANCE) My fiancée. We've been engaged for fifty ecstatic minutes.

CONSTANCE. (*Dropping into brogue*) And if we have fifty ecstatic years to follow, we'll both be satisfied!

(*All gather around with congratulations.*)

Curtain.

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